

BULGARIAN CONSPIRACY

PHILL & SONS



Leaders of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation.

(1) Todor Alexandrov.
(3) Pero Shandanov.

(2) General Alexander Protogerov.
(4) Ivan Mihailov.

BULGARIAN CONSPIRACY

BY

J. SWIRE

AUTHOR OF "KING ZOG'S ALBANIA"

"ALBANIA: THE RISE OF A KINGDOM," ETC.

"By a sagacious and persistent use of propaganda, heaven itself may be presented to a people as hell and inversely the most wretched existence as paradise."

—ADOLF HITLER: *Mein Kampf*



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TO

VISCOUNT CECIL OF CHELWOOD, P.C.

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THE RT. HON. GEORGE LANSBURY, M.P.

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GEOFFREY MANDER, M.P.

D. N. PRITT, K.C., M.P.

HENRY W. NEVINSON

LOUISE MORGAN

*and to all others who, believing my story, gave
me their support on behalf of the condemned*

DAMIAN VELTCHEV

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

SINCE her liberation in 1878 Bulgaria has been a land of conspiracies and in most of them the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) has played a conspicuous part; but that Organisation's story cannot be told apart from the story of Bulgaria, nor understood without some knowledge of the Macedonian Question which is outlined in my Introduction (written mainly for students).

This book is the result of my observations while living in Bulgaria (as the representative of Reuter's Agency, *The New York Times*, and other newspapers) from October 1932 to December 1935 (when I was expelled from the country) and of much supplementary research. My completed manuscript was more than double this book's length, and in reduction to reasonable dimensions many details have had to go—though details are often needed to refute the tissue of contradictory falsehoods spread by the Bulgarian propagandists. The bulk of my information was gathered in Bulgaria (most of it from Bulgarians who have parts in my story), and very little beyond Bulgaria's frontiers. However, I dare not, for obvious reasons, mention the names of my chief informants, nor will the Bulgarian police discover them by pushing pins beneath the finger-nails of my known Bulgarian friends because I never disclosed their names to anybody. But I apologise to those friends if my findings offend their patriotism, though adding that it is my profound sympathy for the Bulgarian people as a whole which has inspired me most to expose their rulers' outrages. Above all I apologise to my secretary, Marie Popilieva, while recording my heartfelt gratitude for her loyal service within the limits of her stout nationalism.

Since anyone who dares criticise the Bulgarian chauvinists' policy is dubbed Communist, spy, or "paid agent of Serbia", I shall probably receive those designations—honours I must decline. This book will certainly be banned in Bulgaria: if not officially, then by that Hidden

Power which has for years stifled free opinions, deluded the Bulgarian public, and prevented the circulation of any books (those by Londres, Perrigault and Doolaard, for example) which might cause embarrassment to the governing clique. Since representatives of the present order in Bulgaria, guiltily convinced before its publication that this book will expose their methods and subterfuges, have already declared their intention to publish attacks upon it, expressing confidence that a leading British newspaper will afford them every opportunity to do so, I feel it wise to declare that I shall treat *anonymous* criticism with silent contempt (though I shall welcome impartial criticism and correction of errors which I may have made while unravelling a very tangled skein).

A book upon Bulgarian conspiracies seems long overdue, for the facts are little understood; moreover coming events often cast their shadows before them in the Balkans. John Gunther's few pages upon Bulgaria in his *Inside Europe* are extremely inaccurate; while Stoyan Christowe's (Christov's) account of the Revolutionary Organisation in *Heroes and Assassins* is written in the Mihailovist interest, whole paragraphs very closely corresponding with paragraphs in books published under the auspices of the terrorist leader Mihailov. Only George Logio, in his *Bulgaria Past and Present*, has made any real attempt to throw light upon Bulgarian affairs since the World War, though the true character of the Revolutionary Organisation seems to have eluded him, but I am indebted to his book for much background material in my chapters upon the War and pre-War periods.

Some words used in the text require definition. They are:—

Bashi Bazouks: Turkish irregulars.

Comitadji: Member of a revolutionary committee but not necessarily a revolutionary in arms (who was known as a tchetnik); but in deference to popular usage I have used the word comitadji instead of tchetnik.

Communist: Any opponent of the Bulgarian Government or individual with views as pink or pinker than Lord Baldwin's.

Grand Vizir: Turkish Prime Minister.

Haiduk: A Balkan Robin Hood, a political outlaw.

Horo: Bulgarian national dance.

Shkupstina: Yugoslav (or Serbian) Parliament.

Sobranié: Bulgarian Parliament.

Supremist: Originally a member or supporter of the *Vrhoven Komitet* — the Supreme Committee; but now any Bulgarian or Bulgarophile Macedonian working for Bulgarian hegemony of the Balkans.

The Porte: Turkish Imperial Government.

Ukase: Royal decree.

Vilayet: Turkish province.

Voivode: Macedonian local chief.

ROYAL SOCIETIES' CLUB

INTRODUCTION

A STRANGER to the Balkan Peninsula might be surprised to find the Blue Danube is a delusion, for it is a muddy river unredeemed by its banks. If he is observant the stranger will find too, as he lingers upon those banks, that the delicate shades which lured him here were but the reflections of harsh colours—red blood and black mourning and the blue of cold fear.

Along the Danube's right bank extend the Kingdoms of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. The people of both are of Slavonic stock, speaking dialects of a common language, using the Kyrillic script (except in northern Yugoslavia) and worshipping (save 5,000,000 Catholics in the north and a Moslem minority) in National Orthodox Churches which use the old Slavonic language (except for sermons in dialect) and have neither spiritual nor dogmatic differences between them. Among these people there grows a will for understanding and ultimate federation, but they have been held apart by early Serbian follies and the conspiracies of Bulgarians with imperial ambitions.

By the World War Serbia won from Austria-Hungary the Slav provinces of Bosnia, Hertzegovina, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slovenia, and The Banat and, united with Montenegro too, became Yugoslavia, with 15,000,000 inhabitants. By war with Turkey and Bulgaria in 1912 and 1913 Serbia had gained a common frontier with Greece, well defined by a mountain range bisecting a vague region called Macedonia; and her share of Macedonia she called South Serbia. In 1912 Bulgaria won a quarter of Macedonia too, calling it the Petritch Department; and although losing by the World War her outlet upon the Aegean Sea and certain strategic districts along her Western Frontier, she has to-day a population of 6,081,000. But the Bulgarians claim that all Christian Slav Macedonians are Bulgars, not Serbs—hence the quarrel between the two Slav nations; it is as if Austria should quarrel with Germany over the racial affinities of the Bavarians.

Macedonia's bare hills and arid plains are bounded by Old Serbia, Albania's mountains, Greek Thessaly, and the rugged Rila and Pirin ranges of Bulgaria. The Bulgarian share holds romance among its tobacco and opium poppy fields beside the Struma River and in the pine forests and lonely tarns upon old El Teppe's flanks; and there is Melnik, a rich survival of Byzantine times with 10,000 inhabitants until the Bulgarians destroyed it in 1913. Founded in the twelfth century between Dantesque cliffs of sandstone, it became the home of disgraced Byzantine nobles; they came with all their treasures, each family building its chapel till there were seventy-two: and a Byzantine Emperor's crown was preserved there until presented to King Constantine of Greece in 1912. The exiles brought here the art of making wine, rich wine of several grades which the 400 souls who dwell among its tragic ruins still make, storing it in immense vats in cool caves deep in the cliffs. There is no road to the place, its main street becomes a surging torrent in a storm, and if you ask a Bulgarian who brought it to this ruin he never knows. It is the strangest place in all Macedonia.

Until 1912 Macedonia's sad villages and market towns, groaning under Turkish misgovernment, sheltered (according to the Bulgarian Vassil Kantchev) 1,179,000 Slavs (147,000 of them Moslems, known as Pomaks), 498,000 Turks, 225,000 Greeks, 125,000 Albanians, 78,000 Vlachs, 70,000 Jews, 55,000 Gipsies and 22,000 miscellaneous, a veritable *macédoine* totalling 2,252,000 of whom 1,339,500 were Christians. Of the Greeks—who dwelt in the towns and southern Macedonia, many were Hellenised Slavs or Vlachs. The Vlachs (or Wallachs) shared with the inhabitants of Wallachia (now Roumania) descent from Latinised native stocks which had not been absorbed by the fringes of the Slavonic immigration in the sixth century. The Jews and Gipsies were townsmen. But precise statistics never bothered the Turks, and when they did compile any they classed the population simply as Turks (meaning the Moslem ruling caste) or Greeks (meaning all Christians of the Greek Orthodox Church).

On March 3, 1878, Russia dictated to Turkey the Treaty of San Stefano which revived the early Bulgarian Empire, its bounds extending to Albania's mountains and Salonika's gates; but Great Britain, Germany and Austria-Hungary declined this Russian arrangement which was superseded on

July 13 by the Treaty of Berlin. Russia's Great Bulgaria was carved into three parts—Bulgaria proper (between the Balkan mountains and the Danube) with the Sofia district of "Turkish Serbia", Eastern Roumelia (the Maritza basin), and Macedonia. Bulgaria, inhabited by 2,500,000 peasants (a third Moslems), became an autonomous principality under Turkish suzerainty: while Eastern Roumelia (with barely 1,000,000 inhabitants similarly divided) was placed under a Turkish Christian Governor-General assisted by a European Commission; but Macedonia remained under direct Turkish rule, though reforms were promised.

But the "San Stefano Bulgaria" has remained "a holy ideal" no Bulgarian leader has dared renounce. Bulgaria proper united with Roumelia in 1885; thereafter the Bulgarian nationalists strove unremittingly to acquire Macedonia, hegemony of the Southern Slavs, and outlets upon "the three seas". Serbia—and later, Yugoslavia—was their enemy.

The Serbs, who became completely independent in 1878 when they acquired Nish, Pirot and Vrania, were farther from Macedonia and cut off by a wedge of Moslem Albanians whom the Turks had purposely encouraged to flow into the vacuum left by the Serb emigration in 1690, a wedge extending through Old Serbia to Vrania. Moreover the Serbs, by revolting first among Turkey's Christian subjects, had earned Turkish hatred, so their cultural activities in Macedonia were suspected and thwarted; and they were torn by dynastic squabbles and preoccupied with their kinsmen in Bosnia, Hertzevovina, and the Sanjak of Novi Bazar, provinces the Austro-Hungarians occupied in 1878.

During the first half of the nineteenth century many Macedonian Slavs immigrated to free Serbia, being welcomed as co-nationals and rising, many of them, to her highest places; but after 1878 Bulgaria had the advantages of proximity and size and greater prosperity, and her victory over Serbia in 1885 raised her prestige. Encouraged by the Exarchate (the Bulgarian National Church) thousands of Macedonians came over her border for education and professional opportunities their own country under the Turks did not offer; and having their roots upon both sides of the border, many embraced the Great Bulgaria ideal with the fanaticism of converts. Sharper than their Bulgarian cousins, the most ambitious rose to dominate Bulgarian affairs, forming the nucleus of

a clique, known as *Supremists*, who worked fanatically for Bulgaro-Macedonian supremacy in the Balkans. By 1930 Macedonian immigrants and their children had given to Bulgaria eight Cabinet Ministers, twenty diplomatic representatives, 1,568 school-teachers, and numerous deputies, bishops, judges, officers and journalists; but many of them are the Supremists' bitterest antagonists, preferring a democratic Federation within Yugoslavia to Bulgarian hegemony.

The Supremists' hatred of Serbia is political and dynastic. They stand for *The Cause* of Sofia and the Coburg dynasty against Belgrade and the Karageorgevitches. Yet among them are men whose brothers or cousins were enthusiastic Serbophiles, a notable example being Professor Miletitch whose uncle led the Serbian minority in Hungary; while Macedonian Slav brothers often called themselves respectively Bulgarian, Serbian, Greek and Vlach as advantage dictated! And the Serbian statesman Nikola Pasitch was an engineer in Bulgarian official service once while in exile—which shows the fundamental kinship between the two peoples.

In 1878 the Macedonian Slav masses had no national feelings whatever; but being wearied of Turkish misrule and the Greek Patriarchate's corruption, most of them fell readily under the Bulgarian Exarchate's influence. The Exarchate, founded in 1870 at Constantinople and favoured by the Turks as a counterblast to the rebellious Serbs, rallied the unliberated Slavs of Bulgaria, Roumelia, and Macedonia, being the first Slav organisation able to stand between them and their Turkish overlords or Greek clergy. In 1880 the Exarchate opened a Schools Department, financed by the Bulgarian Government, to maintain schools in Macedonia and Eastern Thrace; it trained Macedonian teachers and poured them back into Macedonia to set the stamp of Bulgarian nationality upon the receptive and discontented peasants. This activity coincided with a growing demand for education, the Sultan Abdul Hamid's increasing tyranny, and the completion of the Salonika-Skoplje Railway which flooded the little tradesmen's markets with cheap goods while opening to Moslem landlords trading opportunities which encouraged their greed at their downtrodden tenants' expense. The Exarchist representatives told these tenants that Moslem landlords had been driven from free Bulgaria and their lands distributed and that prosperous Bulgaria would ultimately liberate the Macedonians too, while giving them now free modern education and the free services of Slav priests; so

the impoverished Macedonians let the Exarchate take over such Slav schools and churches as they had themselves established.

Thus Exarchist propaganda flourished upon sympathetic soil and Macedonia east of the River Vardar (where dialect and customs were closest to the Bulgarians') became a stronghold of Bulgarised Slavs; but the Slavs beyond preserved an independent spirit. Supremists claim that by 1912 the Exarchate had in Macedonia and Eastern Thrace 1,360 schools with 77,000 scholars and 1,329 churches with 1,371 priests; whereas the Greeks claimed 998 Patriarchist schools (in Macedonia only) with 59,600 scholars. Actually it seems there were in Macedonia only 561 Exarchist schools (395 in South Serbia) with 18,300 scholars, though High Schools at Salonika and Bitolje and Normal Schools at Seres and Skoplje sent many students to Sofia University.

In 1913 Serbia and Greece, having driven out the Turks, partitioned most of Macedonia between them and defeated Bulgaria's effort to wrest it from them. Many Patriarchist Slavs welcomed the Greeks; but in South Serbia two-thirds of the Christian Slavs were Exarchists, of whom those under thirty years of age—taught to believe themselves Bulgars—were puzzled or irritated to find they must now call themselves Serbs. Even Supremists admit the Serbs behaved well until provoked, and 20,000 refugees to Bulgaria from the Turks immediately returned to Serbian Macedonia. The Serbs fraternised easily with the people, appointing as officials and teachers and priests local men who accepted the authority of Belgrade and the Serbian Patriarchate; but when Bulgaria attacked Serbia these had to sign declarations of Serbian nationality, using the Serbian termination *itch* (*ič*) to their names, while Bulgarophile fanatics were deported, children forbidden to sing Bulgarian songs learnt in Exarchist schools, priests praying for the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand thrashed, and in many cases the people made to Serbise their shop signs and even the inscriptions upon grave-stones. However, such crude methods were the outcome of Bulgaria's treacherous attack and Serbian determination to crush agitators and accomplices of raiding bands from Bulgaria.

The Serbisation of Macedonian names was no great hardship. The termination *itch* had prevailed in Serbia as the Serbian dialect was developed; but until 1912 not a few Bulgarian high officials had this *itch* too, as had Macedonian

leaders (though their names have been Bulgarised by Bulgarian historians). It was only after the Serbo-Bulgarian War in 1913 that it became indiscreet to *itch* in Bulgaria. Originally a Balkan Slav was known by his Christian name. He was, say, Ivan. He became a priest—or *Pop*: so his name would be *Pop-ivan*. His son called himself *Pop-ivan-ov*—*Pop-ivan-son*: and so the name would stay if he was Bulgarian; but if he became a Serb he would be *Popivanovitch*.

The Bulgarians, though pretending tolerance towards minorities, made even the Albanians add *ov* to their names when they occupied Macedonia in 1916—often with incongruous results. How often in Bulgaria, where there are over half a million Moslems of Turkish blood, does one find an official or deputy with a name that does *not* end in *ov* or *ev*? And what liberties have the 75,000 (by Bulgarian statistics) Roumanian villagers in northern Bulgaria? Placards tell them it is unpatriotic to speak Roumanian, reading Roumanian books brings persecution, and they must Bulgarise their names if they wish to prosper. There is, too, an official list of patriotic Bulgarian Christian names and children may be baptised with no others.

Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in 1915 to wrest Macedonia from Serbia and for a short while succeeded. She appointed Supremist officials, teachers, priests and bishops whose appalling cruelties caused an Inter-Allied Commission of Enquiry to report afterwards that "it is really impossible to believe that they considered for one moment that [Macedonian] population was an integral part of their nation". These "liberators" were driven out in 1918.

The Bulgarians, though a kindly and industrious people often breeding truly remarkable men, are in general gross and parsimonious and envious, servile and untruthful and suspicious, almost insensible to pain, and indifferent to the interests of others outside their families. So the unscrupulous among them rise, the rare altruists go under. There is no aristocracy, no traditions. Almost 80% of them are peaceful peasants who care nothing for territorial gains and think the town-dwelling minority unproductive parasites; but they have been muzzled by a system (inaugurated by Tsar Ferdinand) which has presented a façade of democratic government to naïve observers. Dr. Seton-Watson wrote truly that Tsar Ferdinand was "one of the chief

corrupters of his age. . . . From Hungary Ferdinand imported with him the specifically Magyar quality of self-advertisement in the foreign Press, of throwing dust in the dazzled eyes of strangers. . . . Foreign observers have always exaggerated the importance of the parties and underestimated the power of the Crown." Those words might equally have been written of Ferdinand's Bulgarian-educated soldier son Boris in whose favour he abdicated in 1918, for propaganda has exaggerated Boris' popularity, his democratic manner, amiability and passion for driving railway engines, while ignoring the subtle role he plays, his intolerance of criticism, his consistent support of the Supremists' aims, and his absolute powers.

The Bulgarian Constitution promulgated at Trnovo in 1879 laid down that the Tsar is Commander-in-Chief of Bulgaria's armed forces in peace and war, confers military ranks, may commute sentences and pardon criminals: the executive power is his and his decrees become law when countersigned by *the respective Ministers* who assume all responsibility. If the State is in danger and the Sobranié cannot be convoked, the Tsar may, at his Ministers' instigation and responsibility, issue decree-laws which must, however, be approved by the next Sobranié. The Cabinet is composed of all the Ministers, of whom one, chosen by the Tsar, becomes Prime Minister; moreover the Ministers are appointed and dismissed by the Tsar who may appoint to any official post. In 1911 Article XVII was amended to read: "The Tsar is the State's representative in all its relations with foreign countries. It is in His name that the Government negotiates and concludes with foreign countries all treaties, which must be sanctioned by Him. The Ministers inform the Sobranié of them *Directly the Welfare and Safety of the State Permit.*" These provisions still stand.

In 1879 the Constituent Assembly rejected proposals for a Council of State or Senate, a proportion of nominated deputies, and even for an electoral qualification, most representatives being resolved there should be no privileged class and only one Chamber elected by universal male suffrage. In theory this was very liberal; but in practice all power remained the Tsar's, for though responsible to nobody he might appoint, promote, and dismiss Ministers, officers, and functionaries at will. To supplement this power Tsar Ferdinand evolved a clever technique. To create a governing class he encouraged corruption among politicians and

military chiefs while compiling detailed dossiers of their misdeeds so that he might threaten them with exposure if ever they dared oppose him. The tale of a well-known General's meteoric rise shows how Ferdinand wielded his powers. One night this General, then a *Captain* of the Guard, hearing his beautiful wife was closeted with Ferdinand, angrily broke into the royal private apartments. Ferdinand, unabashed, met him at the door.

"What do you want, *Colonel*?" he asked.

The *Colonel* retired, content with this promotion.

By exploiting individualism, encouraging rapacity and rewarding servility, Ferdinand skilfully played against each other those bickering office-seekers who sprang from a legion of impecunious intelligentsia deliberately created by an elaborate educational machine against anticipated territorial expansion. Anyone with strong enough lungs might proclaim himself a party, rally a following by wild promises, then curry favour by professions of loyalty to the Sovereign and Supremist ambitions; and the party's strength mattered not at all if the Palace called it to power, for once in control of the administrative machine it was simple to frame elections and secure a make-belief majority. No Cabinet ever fell until the Sovereign willed. Each individual politician played for his own hand or pocket, caring little or nothing for national welfare and collaborating with his colleagues in office only for his own advantage. If a politician was condemned for embezzlement he was soon amnestied because his Sovereign needed a new pawn; and so, among ninety-six Ministers who governed Bulgaria between 1879 and 1926, forty-eight were condemned, while over thirty general amnesties were proclaimed!

So there were never many principles but many parties in Bulgaria; and the names of the parties meant as little as their programmes; though no party (after Stoilov) called itself Conservative (a name unattractive to the masses), the most extreme Right styling themselves National, Popular, or even Liberal of various brands. Almost alone the Radicals defied Ferdinand, declining office without a genuine majority; but since they would not buy supporters by promising wholesale appointments to Government offices they remained in the wilderness, being joined by Socialists and Agrarians and other opponents of Ferdinand's powers and methods.

Thus there was formed a powerful but corrupt govern-

ing class numbering in 1934 perhaps 300,000. Men of skin-deep culture crowded mostly in Sofia, they clamoured for official posts while waiting and praying and scheming for the day when Bulgaria's expansion would open influential "black-coat" jobs to them all; and any leanings towards moderation among the more thoughtful of them was called Communism. Agriculture they thought degrading and scorned to succour the poverty-stricken villages from which most of them hailed, villages filthy as farmyards, sloughs of ignorance.

Indeed sophistication has many backslidings in Bulgaria's valleys and forests and wide plains. In addition to numerous religious and official holidays there are many of pagan origin which the peasants observe—so many that when allowance is made for bad weather there are barely a hundred working days in the year. There is Wolf's Day, Bear's Day, Mice Day, Horse's Day, Midwife's Day, Black Wednesday, Dry Tuesday, each bringing its particular misfortune if not suitably observed. Against persistent drought a small girl is dressed in sack-cloth, draped with greenery, and led around by a chain about her neck, hopping and chanting an incantation while each housewife in turn empties a jug of water over her. Then there are fanatics near the Turkish border who dance upon red-hot embers as if possessed, yet come to no harm.

Bulgaria's Supremists were not discouraged by defeat in 1918. Though they had fanned Tsar Ferdinand's bellicosity and driven the masses to war, they heaped blame upon their abdicated ruler for Bulgaria's misfortunes and shrieked about an unjust peace; and while protesting innocence they drummed into their children through Bulgaria's militaristic educational system fanatical ideas of revenge, fiercely opposed reconciliation with their brother Yugoslavs and murdered those who counselled sanity. Holding the reins in Sofia they were indifferent to the squalor and poverty of the provinces (hardly good arguments for Bulgarian expansion). Common sense dictated that Bulgaria should cut her losses, forget territorial ambitions and develop herself—as Turkey has done though Turkey's losses were far greater. Two men tried to set Bulgaria on that course. One was Alexander Stamboliski—he was chopped to pieces. The other was Damian Veltchev—he lies in gaol.

Stamboliski's Agrarians were overthrown in 1923, then massacred by Supremist Army Chiefs who began imme-

diately and secretly to rearm Bulgaria while collaborating with Hungary, with Italy (who feared the new Yugoslavia might threaten her supremacy of the Adriatic Sea) and ultimately with the German Nazis. The Exarchate maintained its headquarters at Constantinople and fiercely refused to move to Sofia, arguing that this would signify "abdication of the National Church's right" to jurisdiction over the "oppressed Bulgarians" now under Yugoslav "usurpers". Supremist diplomats clamoured for "Minority Rights" for the "Bulgarians of Macedonia".



Typical Bulgarian Supremist propaganda—a diagram reproduced from a slip to be found in cigarette-boxes during 1933. The black areas represent territories "stolen" from Bulgaria (according to the propagandists) by Serbia, Greece and Roumania; the hand is grabbing "reparations"; while the lettering beneath, referring to the Treaty of Neuilly, proclaims: "Down with Neuilly! Neuilly must be torn up."

But most Macedonians did not want to be Bulgarians. Before the War they had rallied to Bulgaria in despair at Turkish oppression; but now they were ruled by Slavs like themselves. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO), founded in 1893 to win autonomy from the Turks, had violently resisted Bulgaria's annexionist aims, but had fallen ultimately under the influence of the Supremist Committee in Sofia. In 1924, however, most Macedonians in Bulgaria were immigrants from Greek Macedonia who urged understanding with the Yugoslavs

against the Greeks; while the peasants of South Serbia were content provided they obtained civil right. So IMRO leaders tried to reassert their independence; whereupon they were massacred by terrorists led by Ivan Mihailov in the service of the Italophile Bulgarian War Minister Volkov. These terrorists, masquerading as leaders of IMRO to bemuse the public, were used by Italophile Army Chiefs to prevent (by terror and outrages) Bulgarian reconciliation with Yugoslavia. Behind these Army Chiefs stood Tsar Boris and behind him his exiled father. These Coburgs, an alien dynasty, feared South Slav friendship would lead to South Slav Federation; and Federation implies a dual Bulgaro-Yugoslav monarchy in which the native Karageorgevitch dynasty, reigning already over the greater kingdom, would be preferred. So the Coburgs strove for Bulgarian hegemony, valuing their Throne above national welfare or morality. Fear of South Slav Federation undoubtedly influenced Tsar Ferdinand to attack Serbia in 1915—for had the two countries emerged from the World War as friends or allies the movement for Federation might well have been irresistible.

The prevalent desire in both countries for understanding was never more clearly proved than between July 12 and 14, 1935, when 6,000 Yugoslav Sokols—among them 900 Macedonians from South Serbia—came to Sofia in their red shirts and plumed caps to join in a great Rally of Younaks (as the Bulgarian Sokols call themselves). Arriving with their banners and bands they were welcomed with wild joy by the generally undemonstrative Bulgarians. Sofia was never so gay. That artificial hatred of Yugoslavia so fierce two years before was obliterated by a miraculous wave of enthusiasm. There were men from Yugoslav Bled to Bulgarian Bourgas—and women too, in their gorgeous national dresses—fraternising and flirting and dancing between Sofia's flower-beds and café tables to the music of Yugoslav bands, while knots of Bulgarians and Yugoslavs sat together over drinks, talking deeply, each understanding the others' dialect: Bulgarian girls wore Sokol caps: Bulgarian officers strolled arm in arm with Yugoslav Sokols. In a public garden a Bulgarian schoolgirls' band played while Bulgarians and Yugoslavs, colourful as parrots, danced wildly into the small hours of the morning beneath the glare of a military searchlight. In the great Cathedral's square thousands of Younaks and Sokols knelt in prayer together, then

marched through the streets bearing flaming torches. Together they delighted vast audiences by their gymnastic displays in the Younak stadium; and at the end Younaks from all Bulgaria danced their wild local dances as the sun went down, the Yugoslav Sokols' leaders catching the general enthusiasm and rushing out to join the men from Nova Zagora. Then the Sokols' and Younaks' standards were crossed and Yugoslavia's Chief Sokol was embraced by General Rachko Athanassov, Minister of Interior and President of the Younaks and organiser of these stirring scenes of South Slav fraternity.

But it was this sense of brotherhood the Supremists had striven to thwart, knowing it doomed their dreams of hegemony. The Supremists' Committee in Sofia of earlier days had yielded place to a "Macedonian National Committee" (elected by delegates from the numerous Macedonian immigrants' "brotherhoods" in Bulgaria) which controlled the Macedonian Co-operative Bank, Students' Association, Women's Union, Ilinden Organisation—of survivors of the Ilinden Revolt, Scientific Institute, and other Macedonian institutions. This Committee, though working legally by propaganda, always collaborated with IMRO which, though "illegal", did as it pleased in Bulgaria; but when in 1928 Mihailov finally usurped control of IMRO and turned it into a purely terrorist organisation he purged the Committee of all moderates and shot with impunity in Sofia's streets all opponents of Supremism until May 19, 1934, when disgusted military subordinates swept the Italophile Army Chiefs from power. Then the Mihailovist terrorists collapsed.

The National Committee, under Mihailov the terrorists' chancellery and Supremists' loud-speaker, claimed to represent "700,000 refugees from Yugoslav oppression" and to speak for "700,000 unliberated Bulgarians" in Yugoslavia—whereas Yugoslav statistics in 1931 put the Orthodox Slav population (of whatever political allegiance) at only 321,000 in that part of Macedonia now Yugoslav which had been allotted to Bulgaria by her abortive treaty with Serbia in 1912. Curiously the Bulgarian Foreign Office always alleged that in Roumania there are 700,000 Bulgarians too—while the Roumanians admit that 38% of the population in South Dobrudja is Bulgarian; yet Supremist animosity was directed almost exclusively against Yugoslavia, for the Macedonian Slavs were ruled by Yugoslavs and ready to become good Yugoslavs if Bulgarian agitation relaxed, whereas the Slavs

in Roumania or Greece were racial minorities who will preserve their Slavonic characteristics.

But the National Committee's statistics do not tally with those of the Bulgarian Statistical Department (where few visiting foreigners go). These official statistics show that in 1926 those inhabitants of Bulgaria who had been born beyond her present frontiers originated as follows:—

From territory now Greek:	Macedonia . . .	69,449
	Thrace . . .	38,572
	Elsewhere . . .	627
From territory now Yugoslav:	Macedonia	
	(South Serbia)	31,695
	West Frontier . .	14,770
	Elsewhere . . .	5,846
From territory now Roumanian:	Dobrudja . . .	23,334
	Elsewhere . . .	6,512
From territory now Turkish:	In Europe . . .	69,734
	In Asia . . .	15,924
		<hr/>
		Total 276,463

Of all these, 234,768 are described as Bulgarians; and of the remainder 23,986 came from Turkey, 8,228 from Roumania, 6,169 from Yugoslavia and 3,312 from Greece. Of them all, 221,191 immigrated between 1912 and 1925, *but only 10,244 came from Yugoslav territory after the defeat of Turkey in 1912*. Foreign nationals in Bulgaria other than Greeks, Roumanians, Russians and Turks, numbered 13,003. The above statistics show only 101,144 Macedonian immigrants in Bulgaria, *of whom two-thirds came from Greek territory*. Odd then, that Bulgaria's relations with Greece were more or less normal, while with Turkey she concluded in 1925 a treaty of "inviolable peace and perpetual friendship", renouncing her claims to Eastern Thrace. If children born in Bulgaria of Macedonian or mixed parentage be counted, the number of Macedonians is, of course, much greater; but most of those Macedonians who settled in Bulgaria before 1912 (as distinct from temporary refugees from the Turks, who generally returned to their homes) immigrated voluntarily to seek employment, so were *refugees* from nobody. Moreover a Convention signed in Sofia on November 26, 1923, provided that all Macedonians (except active revolutionaries) might return to South Serbia with free railway tickets; but the Supremists, who did not

wish to lose good soldiers or "arguments", repeatedly demanded the abrogation of this Convention and easily prevented immigrants from returning (for nobody can leave Bulgaria without a police *exit visa*), murdering those who tried while drumming into the others that terror reigned in South Serbia. Thus the harrowing tale that thousands of Macedonians in Bulgaria were yearning to return if only the Yugoslavs would let them has another side to it!

In 1917, when the Central Powers seemed to be winning, the Supremists proclaimed that the Macedonian Slavs were enthusiastic allies against the Serbs and pined for union with Bulgaria. After the Armistice they begged that at least Macedonia east of the Vardar should be annexed to defeated Bulgaria. Rebuffed, they changed their tactics. They claimed Minority Rights for the Macedonian Slavs—in other words, that the Yugoslav Government should recognise those Slavs as Bulgarians whose education, worship, and political conduct Bulgaria was entitled to control. Had this been granted the Supremists would have continued to Bulgarise the Macedonians by open propaganda and secret terror, inciting them to demand autonomy which would be a prelude to union with Bulgaria when the opportunity arose—as in the case of Roumelia in 1885.

Acting upon a parallel line, IMRO (under Supremist influence), while exasperating the Yugoslavs by outrages which were attributed to "discontented inhabitants" and trying to rally the Macedonians themselves by the slogan: "Macedonia for the Macedonians", declared its readiness to suspend revolutionary activities if Minority Rights were granted, though reserving the right to work by peaceful means for Macedonian autonomy. But IMRO's demand for Minority Rights (which ultimately became merely a pretext for agitation against Yugoslavia) did not necessarily mean that the Macedonians wished for recognition as a *Bulgarian* Minority; on the contrary Todor Alexandrov, leader of IMRO, and many of his lieutenants too, while collaborating with the Supremists as a means to their end, wanted rights for the Macedonians as such: nor was ultimate union with Bulgaria attractive to these ambitious revolutionary leaders. Though the authenticity of an interview granted by Alexandrov to a "special correspondent" of *The Times* (January 4, 1924) may be open to question, his alleged wild boast that he could mobilise 150,000 Macedonians fitted the policy of the Supremists who, thinking

him their tool and unaware that he planned to rally all Macedonians by alliance with the Communists and other Left elements, wished the world to believe him mighty; but if indeed he added that he would welcome any independent enquiry into the state of Macedonia or the protection of any great Power, preferably Great Britain, it was a show of that independent spirit for which he forfeited his life at Supremists' hands eight months later.

Immediately after the World War the demand for autonomy (as distinct from union with Bulgaria) was popular in South Serbia because the Yugoslav administration was excessively corrupt, officials even selling the passes which (to check revolutionaries and agitators) were necessary for travelling from place to place. While Yugoslavia was being organised, many unscrupulous Serbian chauvinist officials were appointed who reacted ruthlessly and often unjustly to the revolutionaries' dastardly outrages and made Bulgarophile agitation an excuse for partisan maladministration—though the tale that since 1912 the Yugoslav authorities have arrested 50,000 Macedonians is clearly a "printer's error" of a "o"! But in 1923 a purge was inaugurated, notably by Dobritza Matkovitch (now Governor of Nish) who discharged officials by the score to check abuses while tightening up military control to check terrorism; whereupon the Supremists, realising good government would soon eliminate surviving Bulgarophile sentiments, redoubled their efforts to provoke the Yugoslav authorities by sending raiding bands and terrorists from Bulgaria.

Only fanatical Bulgarophiles and undisciplined men disgruntled for personal reasons supported these raiders; though there were enough of them to whisper tales of woe into naive foreigners' ears. But the vast majority wanted only peace, caring not at all whether they worshipped under the auspices of the Bulgarian Orthodox Exarchate or the Yugoslav Orthodox Church provided they might have ordinary civil rights as Yugoslav citizens, rights Belgrade was chary of granting while Bulgarian propaganda persisted. Naturally Bulgarophile agitators had no liberties, nor might Bulgarian books and papers circulate while Bulgarians fulminated against everything Yugoslav and pretended the Macedonians were enslaved Bulgars; nevertheless (contrary to Bulgarian propaganda) most priests, teachers, mayors and deputies in South Serbia were local men. There were, in 1924, thirty-five Macedonian deputies in the Shkupstina (mostly

Radical or Democrat sympathisers with the Croat leader Stepan Raditch), who hotly criticised administrative deficiencies though they had no sympathy with the Bulgarian raiders; but when in 1924 the Supremists formed a Macedonian group in the Sobranié these deputies were forbidden to follow this precedent in the Shkupstina which (as intended) would have placed the Macedonians upon a separate and artificial racial basis.

The Supremists' clamour for Minority Rights, based only upon the Bulgarisation effected by Exarchist propaganda while Macedonia groaned under the Turks but fervently pressed to forestall the Macedonians' absorption in Yugoslavia, received curiously strong support from so-called "Bulgarophiles" entrenched at the head of the (unofficial) British Balkan Committee—of which Lord Noel-Buxton is President, Sir Edward Boyle Chairman, and the Bulgarian-born Lady Muir (*née* Stanchov) a member. A tireless worker for Bulgarian claims, Lady Muir's appointment in 1922 by Stamboliski as First Secretary of Legation in Washington brought her the distinction of being Europe's first woman diplomat. Writing in July 1933 to the National Committee these "Bulgarophiles", having reiterated their recognition of the "Macedonian Bulgars" as a Minority and affirmed their conviction that the National Committee had nothing whatever to do with the terrorists (whereas everybody in Sofia knew the contrary), recalled the failure of the National Committee's appeals on behalf of Macedonia to the League of Nations—in ten years the League had ignored forty-three—and attributed this partly to the abuse of Yugoslavia they generally contained and partly to the Yugoslavs' refusal to acknowledge the Macedonians as a Minority. They proposed the preparation (by an international lawyer of standing quite unconnected with the "Macedonian Bulgar case") of a petition claiming to argue before the League Council "the right of the Macedonian Bulgars to be deemed a Minority". This petition, they concluded, would be "a new line of approach" to the Macedonian problem and they hoped the National Committee would adopt it in view of "the strength of their case on grounds of history, ethnography, language and customs".

The Yugoslavs held that in conformity with the treaty relating to Minorities the existence within a State of inhabitants differing by race, religion or language from the majority of the population (and so entitled to Minority

Rights) must be established; but it was precisely because this could not be established in the case of the Macedonian Slavs that it was never attempted—indeed the terrorists deliberately thwarted any legal examination of the Macedonian Question. The “British Bulgarophiles” supported an unproven case; but when they suggested at last that it should be proved the idea evoked no enthusiasm in Sofia.

These “British Bulgarophiles’” attitude encouraged the Supremists’ arrogant claims (which threatened Europe’s peace) and thus contributed to the horrors of which this book tells. Their efforts are gratefully acknowledged in Sofia—there is a Buxton Brothers Boulevard—but not by the Bulgarian peasants. The Balkan Committee, numbering in its ranks many distinguished men without original knowledge of Bulgarian problems and meeting in committee rooms of the House of Commons, gains in Balkan eyes spurious authority for its “Bulgarophiles’” opinions which were re-echoed (during the past fifteen years) by ignorantly prejudiced pronouncements in *The Near East and India*. These “Bulgarophile” busybodies, whose opinions were often based upon the briefest of visits to Bulgaria under Bulgarian official or semi-official auspices, should be warned by the words of that celebrated Bulgarian writer Stoyan Mihailovski who, addressing his compatriots, wrote: “Thou shalt remain to the end an ass. Such is the decree of Providence. . . . Do not ask me to flatter thee, for if I were to say in an apologue that thou art a deft, clever, sweet-voiced animal, common folk would begin to make fun of me and say that I too am an ass.”

No problem has been more obscured by propaganda than the Macedonian Slavs’ racial affinities, nor is it easy to draw a line between peoples of similar origins, language, customs and religion; but an impartial tribunal weighing claims and counter-claims would probably tip the balance in favour of the Serbs, except possibly in regard to districts adjoining Bulgaria. In mediæval times the Bulgars held Macedonia intermittently for 129 years, of which 108 preceded the dilution of Bulgaro-Slav by Kuman and Petcheneg blood; but the Serbs held it afterwards, and continuously, for the same length of time and their rule was long survived by their cultural and religious sway. The Exarchate partially Bulgarised the receptive Slav peasants’ dialect and customs, but their folk-songs tell mostly of Serb heroes. Even in Sofia to-day the most Bulgarophile Macedonian is invariably

referred to as "Macedonian"; nor will foreign merchants deny the difference between the slick but bellicose Macedonian and the stolid but often unprepossessing Bulgarian—hence the Macedonians' stranglehold of business and professions. The Macedonian readily adopts a veneer of culture and will speak honeyed words to the man he is blackmailing, then murder him with artistic cruelty; whereas the downright Bulgarian will kill with a bludgeon.

In 1919 South Serbia (22,776 square kilometres in area, yet only 5,030 productive) was an almost roadless land of malaria-scourged peasants who scarcely knew to sleep in a bed or wash their hands. Until 1912 ground by the Turks, wars had stricken them since. In 1921 the population was 818,377, of whom a third were Moslems, Catholics or Jews, and many more were Orthodox Vlachs; but south-east of a line from Prilip to Kratovo the waterless steppe, treeless and desolate, yellow and dusty in summer, muddy and dismal in winter, had in general less than twenty-five inhabitants to the square kilometre. Yet this area is equally if not more fertile than western Macedonia. So the Yugoslavs began to settle colonists from more populous western Macedonia or rocky Montenegro and Dalmatia upon Turkish landowners' expropriated estates, upon properties abandoned by Turks or Bulgarophiles in 1918, and upon waste pasture lands.

Since Yugoslavia was new-born there was incompetence and abuses and to the end of 1922 only 750 colonist families had been settled in all South Serbia. Colonisation was then suspended while bridges and roads were built and a great Institute of Hygiene at Skoplje which took in hand child welfare, sanitation and social development, bringing untold relief to this suffering land and reducing malaria by 90%.

To the end of 1929, 39,632 colonists had been settled in South Serbia (9,533 Christian and 375 Moslem families), of whom 26,104 were landless Macedonians; while 1,129 families were Serbian and 517 families Slavs from Greece. So it is untrue that South Serbia was flooded with Serbian colonists, and equally that these colonists alone opposed raiders from Bulgaria. Opposition to raiders, directed by former voivodi of IMRO, was already very determined in 1923, the authorities distributing 30,000 rifles in the Bregalnitz Department alone where only 895 colonists' families had arrived in 1929.

In Greek Macedonia, where in 1922 over 40% of the population were infected with malaria, the position was radically changed by the Greco-Turkish Convention for the

Exchange of Populations of January 30, 1923. As its consequence 329,000 Moslems left Greek Macedonia while 638,253 Greeks came in—among 1,221,849 Christian immigrants from Turkey to all Greece. Between 1912 and 1924, 653,824 Moslems, Bulgarophile Slavs and Vlachs left Greek Macedonia while over 40,000 Greeks immigrated from Bulgaria; so the population of Greek Macedonia rose from 1,090,432 in 1920 to 1,412,477 in 1928, just half of them being Greeks from Anatolia. How Greece settled these newcomers is no part of my story; but they turned Greek Macedonia into a Hellenic province and silenced Bulgarian claims, for though the Slavs were not legally obliged to leave many did so voluntarily and others under illegitimate local pressure, so their numbers dropped from 119,000 in 1912 to 77,000 in 1928. Stamboliski's expropriations drove many Greeks from Bulgaria to rich Thracian lands, while more fled from IMRO retaliation for the hardships suffered in Greece by Bulgarised Slavs—whom the Greeks declined to recognise as a Bulgarian Minority (being willing to let them have their own but not Exarchist-controlled schools). Of the Macedonian Vlachs about 30,000 emigrated to the Roumanian Dobrudja—most of them from Greece.

In November 1919 a Bulgaro-Greek Convention had provided for the voluntary emigration of Bulgarophile Slavs from Greece and of Greeks from Bulgaria and the liquidation of their properties by a Mixed League of Nations Commission. On December 9, 1927, the Bulgarian and Greek Finance Ministers signed the Mollov-Kaphandaris Agreement to regulate this liquidation; but Greece tried to tie it with reparations due to her and her claim to compensation for victims of the anti-Greek riots in Bulgaria in 1906, there being a considerable balance in Bulgaria's favour when the Mixed Commission concluded its difficult task in 1930. Hence a cause of friction between Bulgaria and Greece, Bulgaria's truculent rejection of arbitration leading to an undignified squabble in 1931. Yet this friction remained diplomatic and outrages in Greece were few.

By Bulgarian statistics there were in 1926 in Petritch Department (Bulgarian Macedonia) 186,040 inhabitants, of whom 8,121 were Turks or Gipsies, 25,578 were Pomaks, and 37,277 were poverty-stricken Slav peasant immigrants (most of them from Greece). The Bulgarian Government blocked League of Nations intervention on behalf of the immigrants until 1926, when a Refugee Settlement Loan

1. *Chlorophyll a* (Chl *a*) is the primary photosynthetic pigment in most plants and algae. It is a green pigment that absorbs light energy in the blue and red regions of the visible spectrum. Chl *a* is essential for the light-dependent reactions of photosynthesis, where it converts light energy into chemical energy.

2. *Chlorophyll b* (Chl *b*) is an accessory pigment found in green plants and green algae. It is a yellow-green pigment that absorbs light energy in the blue and orange regions of the visible spectrum. Chl *b* transfers the absorbed energy to Chl *a* for use in photosynthesis.

3. *Carotenoids* are a group of pigments that include carotenes and xanthophylls. They are responsible for the yellow, orange, and red colors seen in autumn foliage. Carotenoids absorb light energy in the blue and green regions of the visible spectrum and transfer the energy to Chl *a*. They also play a role in protecting the photosynthetic apparatus from damage by reactive oxygen species.

4. *Xanthophylls* are a subset of carotenoids that are yellow in color. They are involved in the light-harvesting process and the dissipation of excess light energy as heat, a process known as non-photochemical quenching. This helps to prevent the over-reduction of the photosynthetic electron transport chain and the production of reactive oxygen species.

5. *Anthocyanins* are water-soluble pigments that are responsible for the red, purple, and blue colors in many plants. They are not directly involved in photosynthesis but can play a role in protecting the plant from environmental stress, such as UV radiation and frost.

CHAPTER I

THE TERRORISTS

It is October 9, 1934. Marseilles is welcoming a King. The French and Yugoslav tricolours, hanging from windows and balconies, brighten the route from the docks to the railway station. An open car drives slowly between the packed spectators upon the pavements. Suddenly a man bursts from the crowd, dodging the sparse police lining the route. He leaps upon the car's running-board. Revolver shots ring out. A mounted officer's glittering sabre cuts the man down. There are cries, pandemonium, the crowd surges forward to lynch the assassin. Then newspaper offices the world over buzz with excitement, startling their public with glaring posters and alarmingly recalling the Sarajevo crime in 1914. King Alexander of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou are dead, killed by the wild bullets of one Kalemén, member of the Croatian Revolutionary Organisation *Ustacha* which has its headquarters in Hungary. Accomplices had waited in Paris to kill the King if Kalemén did not succeed in Marseilles; others had gone to London, ready to assassinate King Alexander there if the others failed and he should go to visit his son Peter, at school in Surrey: so many Londoners must have rubbed shoulders with these murderous agents of revisionist Italy and Hungary.

But the assassin's name was not Kalemén. A skull and crossbones, tattooed upon his arm, were a clue: and his finger-prints, sent to the Sofia police, proved his identity. He was Velichko Dimitrov, alias Vlado "Tchernoziemski" (meaning "Black Earth")—nicknamed Vlado the Chauffeur, for whom the Bulgarian police had been hunting. So the world eventually learnt that Tchernoziemski belonged to the redoubtable IMRO which had ruled the Petritch Department of Bulgaria and dominated Bulgarian Governments until the *coup d'état* of May 19, 1934, had placed its enemy Kimon Georgiev in power. For fifteen years this terrible

Organisation had waged unofficial warfare against Yugoslavia while assassinating its enemies in Sofia with impunity; but in June Georghiev had announced that the Bulgarian military authorities in Petritch Department had already confiscated from it 10,938 rifles, 701,388 rounds of ammunition, 7,767 hand grenades, forty-seven machine guns and other military supplies.

Actually Tchernozemski belonged to a band of professional assassins euphemistically called the "punitive division of IMRO". These terrorists, most of them criminals from South Serbia, were commanded by Ivan Mihailov and a group of young Macedonian associates serving Italophile chiefs of the Bulgarian Army and receiving a substantial subsidy from Italy. They had distinguished themselves, not by revolutionary exploits, but by murdering peasants and moderate politicians and old leaders of IMRO in Bulgaria. With them Mihailov had, at General Ivan Volkov's instigation, usurped control of IMRO by assassinating in turn Todor Alexandrov and General Alexander Protogerov, then reigned supreme in Petritch Department under protection of martial law until May 1934. Previously, Bulgarian Governments had pretended IMRO was an uncontrollable organisation of which there was no trace upon Bulgarian soil—it was "beyond the law", which simply meant the law might not interfere with it; yet Mihailov and his lieutenants never left Bulgaria (except comfortably, upon missions to Rome) and came to Sofia whenever they chose. In this police-ridden land which nobody may leave without an *exit visa*, where nobody may dwell without an identity card, and where a "Black Cabinet" at the G.P.O. (under Democratic Mouchanov's government) blatantly examined private correspondence, these terrorists "could not be found"; yet they carried police passes, though discreetly withholding their photographs from the Press.

The *Organisation*, as this secret *Mafia* was called by scared and whispering Bulgarians, cast over the land a black shadow of terror, muzzling free speech more effectively than any censorship. It had several functions. First, it worked against understanding between Bulgaria and Italy's rival Yugoslavia, committing outrages in Yugoslavia to exasperate the Yugoslavs and murdering or terrorising in Bulgaria all who spoke of such understanding, taking a heavy toll of Macedonian immigrants—Federalists who, having roots upon both sides of the frontier, were advocates of South Slav

Federation. Next, it worked by similar methods against "Communists" who dared challenge the supremacy of Bulgaria's governing class—a class inspired by fanatical ideas of territorial aggrandisement and leaning always towards Europe's bellicose Dictatorships. Finally, its chiefs performed the functions of "Fascist Commissars" among the immigrants in Bulgaria, mainly among those in Petritch Department who were conscripted into a militia ready—when Italy and Hungary were prepared for war—to invade South Serbia and cut Yugoslavia's vital communications with the free sea at Salonika. Moreover these "Volunteers", or "IMRO Reserve", as the militia were called, must be ready always to crush revolt by Bulgarian moderates, so the terrorists drummed into them that talk of friendship with Yugoslavia was treachery to The Cause of "Macedonian Liberation". Petritch Department, annexed by Bulgaria in 1912, had remained under the control of IMRO which had fallen under Supremist influence. A State within a State, it was a base for attacks upon Serbia before Bulgaria declared war in 1915 and a base for the "Macedonia-Adrianople Volunteer Division" which helped to drive the Bulgarian peasants into war. In 1923 General Volkov resolved that it should be so again and issued arms to IMRO for the militia.

The Mihailovists sometimes varied their political tune, but it was always the Italophile Supremists who called it; they preached hatred of Yugoslavia and taxed the immigrants for The Cause, those who espoused it ardently being rewarded with lands and official appointments. Mihailov's "illegal" Central Committee controlled and collaborated with the "legal" National Committee and the deputies they nominated to represent Petritch Department, and there were no differences between them except that Mihailov's Committee carried out and accepted responsibility for all illegal acts. From the National Committee radiated a vast network of Supremist agents to every chain of responsibility, every State department, every newspaper or business office, café or street-corner; so it mattered nothing that (for example) the Minister of Education was an Agrarian opponent of Supremism if Philip Manolov of the National Committee was Secretary-General with Mihailov's assassins behind him!

The carefully-built myth of Mihailov's power was obliterated by Damian Veltchev's *coup d'état* in 1934, which overthrew the Italophiles. That power had been de-

rived from Volkov and his associates among the Supremist Generals, diplomats, and high officials of Bulgaria; and behind them had stood Tsar Boris, wedded to an Italian Queen and Italian policy, son of a German father of Hungarian extraction. Mihailov, "irresponsible" agent of the War Office, obeyed their secret instructions. So "Mihailovist" became synonymous with "Supremist"; and a Supremist might be a Mihailovist assassin or Minister-Plenipotentiary or Director of the Public Debt. But most Supremists were of Macedonian origin, for the pacific Bulgarians cared little for Supremist aims.

King Alexander was Yugoslavia's unifier; yet his popularity in South Serbia was growing for it was believed he planned a liberal regime—attractive to the Federalists. In Rome in 1922 Macedonian revolutionary chiefs had been urged to contrive his death. In 1934 he died at the hand of a fanatic who went to certain death in the belief that he served The Cause; but in fact Tchernozemski sacrificed himself for Hungarian revisionism, Italian imperialism, and the aspirations of Bulgarian Supremists who had convinced him the Slavs of South Serbia groaned under King Alexander's oppression.

Tchernozemski, by his friends' account a gentle vegetarian because he held it cruel to kill animals, was born at Shtip in 1897. Having served the Bulgarians too well during the World War, he fled with them when they were driven from South Serbia and eventually joined a comitadji band raiding into Yugoslavia. But he fell under Mihailov's influence and first distinguished himself on September 24, 1924, by shooting in Sofia that altruistic veteran revolutionary Hadji Dimov (intimate friend of IMRO's founder, Deltchev) who had become a Communist deputy. Tchernozemski was caught by Bulgarians who disliked murderers, so he was formally condemned to fifteen years' imprisonment: but soon he was walking the streets with police agents! As a chauffeur who took victims "for a ride" he had become an expert murderer before he killed the Macedonian leader Naoum Tomalevski on December 2, 1930.

Tomalevski, who had threatened to expose the Government's connection with Mihailov's terrorists, was celebrating at home in Sofia the fortieth day after his son's birth. He went into his garden to plant a memorial tree as the custom is. The window curtain in an overlooking house moved. He noticed—and told his elder boy to run for his revolver.

But it was too late. Two shots rang out. Tomalevski fell into his mother's arms, dead. His bodyguard rushed into the street, firing at the assassins who were making off. They fired back, mortally wounding the plucky lad; but as he dropped one of them fell too. This assassin's funeral was conducted by a Bulgarian bishop, for Tomalevski was the hero's eighteenth victim! The other assassin, Tchernozemski, was waylaid by an officer. He drew a revolver: but the officer was quicker, and gave him in charge. For such interference with the law this officer was soon transferred to the retired list! Tchernozemski said he was a wood merchant in Sofia but boasted of his connection with IMRO; he had waited with his companions for three days in a room rented by a police agent and had shot Tomalevski with police carbines! While he awaited trial a fellow-prisoner tattooed upon Tchernozemski's arm the skull and crossbones of IMRO. He was sentenced to life imprisonment; but late in 1931 he was amnestied and attached to Kyril Drangov, Mihailov's director of terror in the Bulgarian capital!

Tchernozemski soon won fresh laurels, showing (writes Christowe) "rare tact and bravery in the execution of individual assignments"; but the *Ustacha* asked Mihailov for an expert to instruct Croat terrorists in Hungary, whereupon Drangov took Tchernozemski in July 1932 to the Croat leader Pertchetz at Budapest. So Veltchev's *coup d'état* undoubtedly averted a European war because (so the Yugoslav Premier Yevtitch afterwards told me), if Georghiev's Government had not suppressed the terrorists in Bulgaria before King Alexander was killed, nothing would have restrained the infuriated Yugoslav Army from marching upon Sofia to exterminate those criminal Supremists who had long premeditated and bear responsibility for the King's death. Yet Veltchev lies in Sofia gaol for this contribution to the peace of Europe.

The terrorists labelled their Bulgarian victims Protogero-vists, Federalists, or Communists. The Protogero-vists were friends of the murdered Protogero-v. The Communists were any opponents of Supremism who could not be charged in Courts of Law.

Communism was a conveniently elastic term justifying persecution or massacre, a bogey used to frighten Europe into granting loans to Bulgaria or ignoring her surreptitious rearmament. It was the Communism of a soldier who, being reproached for kissing a sacred ikon in church with his

cap on, replied simply: "But I am a Communist." There were not more than 12,000 true Communists in Bulgaria (so Premier Mouchanov told me in 1931); but there were hundreds of thousands of discontented people who rallied to their banner for want of a better against the aggressive Supremism of the corrupt governing class. Yet these "Communists" were persecuted under Mouchanov's supposedly democratic government with a ferocity hardly surpassed by his predecessors'; and this Government, which could never trace Mihailov's assassins, were for ever discovering Communist conspiracies, finding printing presses in cellars or mountain caves, and dragging to mass trials poor wretches whose only offence was their possession of literature held seditious by their rulers.

A fortnight before the *coup* in 1934 which laid Mouchanov low I chanced to attend at Sevlievo (to the authorities' vast irritation) the trial of ninety-three "Communists", half of them boys and girls under twenty years, some laden with clanking chains of mediæval immensity attached to great weights; and these children, ringed about in court by police with fixed bayonets at the ready, were condemned to ten or fifteen years' imprisonment for calling or thinking themselves Communists. Yet the Bulgarian Supremists would have roused the world had there been a like trial of Macedonian Slavs in Yugoslavia!

It was in August 1931 that I went first to Bulgaria. Coming through Greece from Albania, Bulgaria seemed well ordered by comparison and Sofia (of 300,000 inhabitants) a fair city with its tall blocks of flats and trim public gardens, its wild café music and smart officers in their white summer tunics, its trams and yellow-paved streets. Stuffed with propaganda by the Foreign Office Press Bureau, *Agence Télégraphique Bulgare* (*Bulagence*), National Committee, and *Bulgarian-British Review*, I was pushed far towards Bulgrophilism during my month's stay and was disposed to believe the Bulgarians' complaint that they had been robbed of Macedonia, the Dobrudja and Thrace. I had read of the feud between Mihailovists and Protogerovists. I was told the Protogerovists were a handful of assassins in Yugoslav pay who wantonly murdered heroes of IMRO while they rested in Sofia from revolutionary activities beyond the border, even Mouchanov assuring me IMRO was so elusive and so powerfully supported by all Bulgarians that none could gainsay it! A halo of romance surrounded young

Mihailov who lived and fought in Yugoslavia but retired sometimes for rest to the lofty Pirin mountains of the (Macedonian) Petritch Department, safe there among devoted adherents—for nobody told me Mihailov never dared go to Yugoslavia, ruled the Department by ruthless terror, and once even ordered the murder of a man who had told these truths to a British Minister in the hearing of a German correspondent who was Mihailov's friend.

I was eager to meet Mihailov. Early one morning a man to whom I could speak no word rapped at my hotel bedroom door and beckoned. I followed him into a car which drove us all round Sofia and stopped at a street corner not far (as I afterwards found) from our starting point. My guide led furtively to the door of a flat and I was welcomed in fluent English by a dapper little man, sallow and pock-marked. It was Yordan Tchkatrov, Mihailov's ambassador in Sofia. Tchkatrov bewailed the cruel fate of the poor Macedonians in South Serbia; but as for Mihailov, he was "somewhere beyond the frontier" and I could not see him.

A doorway close to the National Bank in one of Sofia's main streets bore a brass plate with the words *Comité National des Réfugiées Macédoniennes en Bulgarie*. This National Committee, I was assured, had no connection with the revolutionaries—though naturally it sympathised with them! Venerable Dr. Alexander Stanichev, the president, received me, speaking with suitable emotion of "Macedonia's tragedy", then urged me to see "the Black Frontier" the Yugoslavs had built to separate "700,000 refugees in Bulgaria" from their native hearths and mothers' arms. So a representative of the Committee whisked me from Sofia one day, our car engulfing in its clouds of dust slow ox-carts and chickens and peasants with linked hands dancing the *Horo* to wild music, passing rocky hills and patches of gigantic sun-flowers and golden cornfields till we reached Kustendil with its giant water-melons and its statue of Todor Alexandrov in the market square.

Beyond Kustendil we came to the frontier, picking up the Bulgarian sector commander on our way. And here was a battle front, built by the Yugoslavs at immense cost to guard themselves against surprise. So far as I could see there stretched over hill and valley upon the Yugoslav side of the white pyramids marking the frontier a stout thorn fence with barbed wire entanglements behind. In the hollows

were trip wires and pits with spiked stakes in them, upon the hill-tops tall observation platforms. Every half mile or so stood a concrete blockhouse with steel shutters, one of them precariously sharing the crown of a little hill with a modest Bulgarian post only three yards from it, though they seemed to be restrained from flying at one another like angry dogs by a tangle of barbed wire between them. There were observation pits too, every hundred yards or so, to conceal Yugoslav night patrols who fired at sight upon anyone trying to force a passage—so shots in the darkness and a corpse upon the wire in the morning were commonplace.

This Black Frontier stretched from the Greek border at Strumitza to the Dragoman Pass upon the Orient Express route and no travellers might cross it. The sector commander told that the Yugoslavs, who outnumbered the Bulgarian troops upon the border by about twenty to one, had four lines of defence against revolutionaries from Bulgaria—so the revolutionaries could not cross and the outrages of which the Yugoslavs complained were the work of oppressed local people. If some did cross it was not Bulgaria's fault for she was too disarmed to man her frontiers adequately. But two things he did not explain. For fifty yards beyond the frontier all brushwood was cut to the ground, whereas it grew as it chose on the Bulgarian side, splendid cover for any bent upon an illegal passage (yet Bulgaria had a Compulsory Labour Corps which might have cleared it). In the Bulgarian posts, little whitewashed buildings with red-tiled roofs, quarters for frontier detachments but not for defence, there hung above the men's cots the scowling portrait of Todor Alexandrov, side by side with a picture of Tsar Boris—and sometimes Queen Giovanna too! So Alexandrov, revolutionary leader in whose footsteps his murderer Mihailov claimed to follow, whose portrait hung beside a map of Great Bulgaria in many a Government office and every Sofia café (to mark its patriotism), presided over the dreams of soldiers who, in wakeful hours, were under (nominal) orders to prevent Mihailov's men from raiding Yugoslavia! In practice these Bulgarian posts were advanced bases for Mihailov's men, whose outrages obliged the Yugoslavs to guard all railways till passengers thought Yugoslavia an armed camp, to search all railway coaches for hidden bombs, to examine all luggage deposited at railway stations—even at Belgrade.

This was an unjust frontier, my companions complained,



(Above) Upon the "Black Frontier"—Bulgarian (*left*) and Yugoslav Frontier Posts: *see p. 40.* (Below) Troops and police searching Sofia for arms on June 24, 1933.

for it separated Bulgarians from their properties, villagers from their wells: and a woman was called to touch my heart with crocodile tears while telling how she owned a field beyond the line. The other side of this tale was that owners of such "divided properties" might go to them freely with passes, though the Bulgarian terrorists' activities imposed caution upon the Yugoslavs who sometimes made mistakes; but since there was no racial boundary the frontier had been determined mainly by strategic advantages and sometimes caused hardships to local folk.

Sixteen months later I was standing at a street corner in Sofia with the Macedonian reporter (Sprostranov) I employed. Rapiers of wind pierced our clothes and caught the litter in its dusty eddies. Heavy grey clouds were gathering to cast a white mantle over Mount Vitosha's purple mass and muffle the streets till the only sound after nightfall would be the jangling of sleigh-bells and the sharp cries of the drivers peering from beneath their frosted eyebrows and fur caps. Soon the dry snow would sing under foot and there would be tales of wolves in the suburbs.

But those wolves were lambs beside the human wolves prowling the streets in fours and fives, hats over eyes, collars turned up, both hands thrust into overcoat pockets where they clutched revolvers. Beneath an ordered exterior Sofia was a furtive city of whispers and terror and shots in the night, spies and listeners, anonymous letters or telephone calls, blackmail and threats. The struggle between attacking Supremists and defending moderates was at its height, waged by uncouth gunmen who lurked in cafés, awaiting orders to kill—orders sometimes casually scribbled upon a menu card and often accompanied by a photograph whereby the gunman should identify his victim. Going to a restaurant one sought a corner far from windows. Bodyguards waited for deputies before the Sobranié, no man of free opinions stirred without them nor went out after dark unless he must. Even the Foreign Legations were guarded. Yet the new Palace of Justice was the largest building in all Bulgaria! In cafés, even in crowded tramcars victims of all ranks and professions fell, while in the streets there were veritable battles, five or six aside blazing off two revolvers apiece regardless of passing pedestrians who were often wounded. £4 was a fair price for a murder, often earned by former police agents. If legs or waiting cars could not carry the assassins beyond reach of unsympathetic police-

men, they always pleaded they had written orders from IMRO and must obey or be killed themselves; so they were sent to rest in gaol, content in the knowledge that their employers would soon have them amnestied. Every department of State was split into two camps waging civil war by proxy and both sides had friends in the police, so shooting affrays were part of the Capital's daily life but investigations seldom went beyond preliminaries.

But outrages in Yugoslavia were commonplace too. The Bulgarian Government always denied they were the work of terrorists from Bulgaria, saying IMRO was *internal* and *revolutionary* and existed only in "unliberated Macedonia"; but unofficially everybody knew the contrary. Tchkatrov had declared at a public meeting in Sofia during March that "IMRO will continue to struggle by the same methods which it has employed in the past, while repudiating all responsibility for ensuing international complications".

I asked Sprostranov why should I not cross the border with a raiding band, then write from experience of revolutionary heroism. He went to a telephone, then came again to say I should straightway meet a man who could arrange the matter. Our rendezvous was one of Sofia's most fashionable cafés.

We sat to sip coffee with a rubicund man in khaki jacket and cap. Sprostranov introduced him—Ivan Gioshev, organiser of outrages beyond the frontier in the Kustendil-Drăgoman sector! The Yugoslav authorities offered a big price for his head. Courteously he explained that he could not send me upon a raid now—but in spring perhaps, when the snows were gone and there were leaves upon the trees. Then he asked a question. Had the official Yugoslav news agency (*Avala*) reported any bomb outrages?—Because, he explained, one of his bands was in Yugoslavia and he was eager to know how it had fared, adding that of course *Bulagence* could not report its doings until *Avala* did. We had no news for him.

But next day *Bulagence* issued the following, from *Avala*, dated Belgrade, December 20, 1932:—

"Last night, towards 23 hours, upon the outskirts of Zaitchar and near the barracks which are situated outside the town, unknown persons threw fourteen grenades of which twelve burst without causing any damage. The grenades thrown were of the 'Odrin' type used by the Bulgarian comitadjis. An enquiry was opened immediately

to discover the aggressors. It has revealed traces leading to the Bulgarian frontier."

To this message *Bulagence* added:

"According to information obtained by the Bulgarian Telegraphic Agency upon this subject, the Bulgarian frontier authorities have not observed the passage over the frontier of any single individual."

In a further message *Avala* reported the explosion of a time bomb near Zaitchar station (causing slight damage) and discovery of another, unexploded. It was supposed these had been laid by the same individuals who threw grenades near Zaitchar barracks. The Director of *Bulagence* told me that of course all this was the work of "oppressed Macedonians" in South Serbia. I refrained from contradiction.

On December 24 *The Times*, referring to the closing of the frontier by Yugoslavia because Bulgaria declined joint investigation of an earlier incident, wrote (editorially) that "the internal condition of Yugoslavia is most unsatisfactory . . . this may explain why the Dictatorship has attached such importance to a trivial affair". Perhaps it was the lingering influence of its notoriously Bulgarophile Balkans Correspondent of pre-War days, J. D. Bouchier, that warped *The Times's* outlook upon Bulgarian affairs sometimes—or was it misled? There had been hundreds of "trivial affairs" since the War, and Yugoslavia's restraint was commendable. Between 1919 and 1934 raiders from Bulgaria committed 467 outrages in South Serbia, killing 706 Yugoslav officials or civilians, the years of greatest activity being 1923 (51 outrages), 1924 (74), 1925 (55), 1927 (61), and 1933 (34). Bulgarian frontier posts sometimes fired at Yugoslav patrols to cover the raiders' passage; and whenever a terrorist fell his biography and photograph were published by "illegal" papers circulating freely in Sofia.

Any Bulgarian who dared befriend a Yugoslav was "a spy for Serbia"; and I fell under suspicion because seen sometimes with the Yugoslav First Secretary, an old friend of my Albanian days. Returning in March 1933 to Sofia's terror-heavy atmosphere from a brief holiday with Reuter's representative in Belgrade I was shunned on all sides, my telephone audibly tapped, Bulgarian friends were warned by Foreign Office officials that I was a spy, Sprostranov left me, and the curtains of a window facing my door moved whenever I had a caller.

In January 1933 the terrorists shot in Sofia a Labour deputy (Traikov), by Bulgarian measure a very Red Communist who had dared preach an eight-hour day. His funeral was riotous, attended by police in force. Sprostranov and I were talking to police officers when three men in plain clothes passed in single file, their hands in pockets.

"Who are those?" asked one of the officers sharply.

"IMRO"—answered another with a shrug.

So Mihailov's terrorists, calling themselves IMRO, collaborated with the police to prevent a demonstration at their victim's funeral!

In 1933 there were few streets in Sofia without bullet-marked walls and foreigners were sometimes nearly bullet-marked too. One evening in April, while Sofia's main boulevard was crowded, five Mihailovists opened fire at the Protogerovist leaders Anastas Naoumov, Lef Glavinchev, and their bodyguards. Strolling Sofiots fled in panic, or threw themselves to the ground and blazed away too with their privy arsenals. The Director of the Italian Bank was shopping with his wife. They drove in their car at top speed from this hail of bullets; but several police, displaying unusually impartial zeal and thinking the car held the aggressors, fired at it and wounded the chauffeur, while the aggressors slipped quietly away, their leader innocently strolling into the police station "on business" and hiding there till all was over. Italy made no protest, for the Italians did not conceal their sympathy with the Mihailovists and Italian journalists reported only affrays in which Mihailovists were attacked!

Though local newspapers were full of political murders they reported only incidents already known to everybody. On New Year's Eve the American director of an oil company dodged behind a tree as bullets whistled out of the fog, and one of the British Consulate staff had a like experience in the Boris Gardens soon afterwards. An Englishman saw a man knifed to death in a main street one night while the police watched. An Italian journalist had barely reached home one evening when stray Mihailovist bullets splintered his door. At Easter a girl from the American College was kidnapped in Sofia, gagged and blindfolded, carried to Petritch Department, and interrogated for three days about her father's visitors. The newspapers mentioned none of these incidents, so one wondered how many more there were of which nothing was heard.

Another unwritten story was the kidnapping of Major Yanko Vapzarov, an old revolutionary who had repudiated Mihailov. In April he came from Bansko to Sofia. One day a car carrying terrorists in police uniforms drew up beside him in the street. Tsar Boris, he was told, wished to see him—for the Tsar knew him well. He vanished—and his luggage was collected from his hotel by “police”. His three bodyguards in Bansko were murdered: and his son, coming to look for him, disappeared too.

“Be careful you don’t soon stink” was the terrorists’ admonition to their critics. So everyone presumed that Vapzarov stank—like so many others. But he had been taken to a building behind a high wall near Kustendil, a house of inquisition standing in a vineyard where victims were buried. He was charged with giving a grenade to somebody who had thrown it into a house in Bansko where Mihailov was being entertained. Tortured, Vapzarov and the bomb-thrower admitted the charge; then the bomb-thrower was hanged. But Vapzarov, having friends in high places, was held captive under the eyes of the Bulgarian authorities until the *coup d’état* in 1934 released him.

One day in May 1933 great posters, signed by the Minister of Interior, proclaimed that though firearms might no longer be carried by unlicensed persons, licences would be issued to all who feared for their lives; and anybody might employ armed bodyguards, though these must be of good character and registered at the Town Hall.

Some days later I was travelling in a charabanc with other journalists, and representatives of the National Committee, to visit Alexandrov’s grave near Melnik—for the Mihailovists idealised the leader they had murdered. I sat with the president’s (Dr. Kondov’s) three bodyguards. Not far from Sofia a heavy cart blocked the road and a policeman jumped upon the running-board. Had we any firearms and where were our licences? An Italian correspondent and the Hungarian Press Attaché among us angrily abused the police for stopping foreign correspondents, whereupon the police proposed to search us. Then Kondov produced his revolver, saying he had no licence but everybody knew he might carry arms. The police led him away into the village, telling him he must telephone to police headquarters for permission to proceed. As he disappeared his guards became restless. Suddenly I felt a cold barrel in my hand—would I look after my neighbour’s gun? No sooner had

I taken it than the other guards thrust their guns behind me for concealment too, in case the police should return. Their example was followed by all our "legal Macedonian" companions till all we correspondents were sitting upon arsenals! But Kondov got his permission.

The National Committee often conducted excursions to Petritch Department, though one's hosts' malign expressions chilled and there was a strain behind the local people's greetings. Yet the myth of contentment and orderliness and high morality here was built up by a certain type of journalist, one of whom wrote that Mihailov's Organisation "had made of this corner of Macedonia a kind of camp or picnic grounds for the Macedonian emigrants in Bulgaria, as well as a haven for itself . . . an example of what it hoped to make all Macedonia".

Sometimes a particularly naive journalist was taken to Mihailov, but this was inconvenient because though Mihailov frequented Sofia the fable that he dwelt "far away in Yugoslavia" had to be maintained. A celebrated American journalist was once led for two days round Petritch Department (blindfolded, lest he should betray the secret trail "over the frontier") till he found himself before the "great leader"—at Banderitza hut in the Pirin Mountains (inside Bulgaria)! Yet he wrote: "Mihailov and I began to walk outside the hut, but not very far and returned again, because about a hundred yards from the hut in all directions there were pickets watching for Serbian patrols." Stoyan Christowe opened his book with an interview almost identical in every detail—except that he did *not* set the scene inside Yugoslavia, where Mihailov never went.

Everyone knew Mihailov and his lieutenants (who often wore comitadji uniforms) were lords of Petritch Department under martial law, that no State official might be appointed there (or if appointed, could not remain) unless they agreed, that the Bulgarian civil authorities had no jurisdiction there whatsoever, that the Mihailovists examined all correspondence, stopped all hostile newspapers, levied regular taxes, forbade marriages of which they disapproved, and turned back Bulgarian visitors who came without their permission or a pass from the National Committee. If foreigners went they were treated with extraordinary solicitude by watchful agents. But few realised the horrors of terrorist rule until newspapers supporting Georghiev's Government lifted a corner of the veil in 1934.



Remains of nine men murdered by the terrorists

The Bulgarian Press photograph opposite shows nine skeletons exhumed near Gorna Djoumaia in August 1934. The peasant who dug their grave in 1931 at the local terrorist chief's order told how they died. His digging was done when they came through the darkness with their escort. They were tied neck to neck, staggering and groaning with pain, for they had been "interrogated" at a house in Krupnik village. Six of them were peasants, one a teacher, and two unknown to the grave-digger—but those he knew were popular men. They were bayoneted, then pushed into the grave—one of them alive. The grave-digger shovelled the earth over them while the executioners wiped their bayonets.

Kustendil, though not in Macedonia, was the terrorists' favourite haunt. They walked about freely. The townsfolk paid "taxes" to them and kept their mouths shut.

In Gorna Djoumaia, capital of "Bulgarian Macedonia", a fine stone monument to the "unknown comitadji" was raised in August 1933 before the Military Club to inspire the townsfolk, the terrorists' impotent accomplices. A prosperous town, the terrorist chiefs found it agreeable. Only they and theirs might buy tobacco crops, which they sold at 100% profit. Objectors were invited to "drink coffee" with Tsrn Kiro and other celebrities at an old mill, a damp place where Kiro had an assortment of instruments for his guests' entertainment; and he admitted in 1934 that in one year he had killed over fifty people. Often his guests were driven from here by a gentle old cabman with two black horses, known as "the Coachman of Death", who served the Organisation like everyone else lest "the crows should eat his body". He drove Dimiter Markov for his last ride early in 1932. Markov had been too popular—he had built a library and protested against the terror. Warned, he fled to Sofia; but he was lured back by a friend. One dark night he was invited to an interview with Mihailov. There was no escape. Beyond the town he was strangled, then hanged from a bridge. Peasants found his body next day—another warning to them all. No newspapers reported the affair; but in 1934 a former Director-General of Bulgarian Elementary Education was condemned to death for it—but still lives.

And so on—one or two cases among hundreds. Truculent villagers who offended terrorist chiefs were simply charged with immorality, espionage, or Communism, then robbed or raped and murdered. An official *communiqué* in 1934 told how one girl was raped in a wood by a dozen terrorists and

then buried alive, while twenty boys were once hanged together for refusing to join the pre-military Association of Macedonian Youths. If a Mihailovist wanted a house he tortured the owner till the poor wretch either died or made the house over; and of what use then was complaint to the authorities once a deed transferring the property was signed? Money was extorted likewise—only the local chief's favour could protect a man. In July 1933 a student was kidnapped in the mountains; but when his father had paid a ransom the lad was murdered lest he told that one of his kidnappers was Dinko, brother of the deputy Vassilev, Mihailovist "Governor of Bansko" who in 1934 admitted a dozen murders. The Sofia police issued a *communiqué* when the boy disappeared, which was all they did.

Nor might opium be sold until its owner had a receipt for dues to the Organisation. But in November 1933 a Gorna Djoumaia merchant sold opium without paying dues. Before Mihailov he was so tortured at the mill that he died of blood poisoning. A bold Bulgarian police chief made enquiries, a military doctor who disliked terrorists having certified the real cause of the merchant's death; so Mihailov warned the widow that if she spoke the truth she and her child would be killed, whereas she would be paid a pittance till the matter was forgotten if she lied that her husband had fallen from a tree. Upon her evidence the authorities dropped this awkward matter. In such rare cases brought against terrorists, money—to the police or the prosecutor—did its work.

After the *coup* in 1934 many who had fled from this terror to other parts of Bulgaria returned to their homes; and villagers who had buried their friends readily dug up their remains for official identification. Yet in the Military Club at Gorna Djoumaia one day in 1933 Tchkatrov had complained sorrowfully to me because *The New York Times* had reported the murder of several peasants by Mihailov's men. "You know it is untrue. Everyone in the Department is with us, so why should we kill them?" So well were the facts hidden that I had almost believed Tchkatrov!

The expenses of this great Mihailovist-Supremist mafia were considerable, for the National Committee, Central Committee, their agents in European capitals, and their assassins all had to be paid, officials and journalists bribed, arms for the militia maintained, extensive propaganda made

and the papers *Makedonia* (the National Committee's organ) and *Freedom or Death* (*Svoboda Ili Smirt*—the "illegal" Organisation's "illegal" organ) heavily subsidised. Mihailov, his lieutenants, and members of the National Committee drew salaries immense by Bulgarian standards, apart from their perquisites and incomes from enterprises (often illicit) under their control; while their regular assassins' pay was about 2,500 *leva* a month (the salary of a junior State official) in addition to fees for successful murders and free board and lodging and clothing from immigrant tradesmen who dared not refuse such "contributions to The Cause".

The Government's secret funds were insufficient to cover these expenses, so immigrants, Jews, rich merchants and the peasants of Petritch Department paid the greater part, the Foreign Office financed propaganda and contributed to general expenses, and there was an annual subsidy through a Sofia Bank of not less than 44,000,000 *leva* from Italy. The annual budget was estimated at 200,000,000 *leva* (about £500,000), though 634,319,550 *leva* were collected from tobacco dues alone between 1926 and 1932. Every collector of State taxes in the Department took an additional 10% "for the Cause". Then every household was required to subscribe to *Makedonia* and every tradesman or farmer was taxed upon his profits or property, head of stock or corn, the terrorists giving receipts. Those who did not pay were fined, and if they still did not pay they had armed guests. No peasant might cut wood nor labourer work without a permit (for which he paid) from the terrorists. Even junior State officials paid for the privilege of working in the Department, while seniors often profited by collaboration with the terrorists who did as they pleased with the funds of State Institutions and made handsome private profits upon the sale of timber from State forests, murdering any zealous foresters who dare ask them to show permits from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Elsewhere in Bulgaria the immigrants' Brotherhoods subscribed to the National Committee. Then 16,000 immigrant-owned businesses paid 10% of profits to The Cause, while well-to-do Bulgarians and Jews were asked (politely and legally enough) for their contributions; but strange things befell those who hesitated to subscribe, or State collectors discovered arrears of taxes which must be paid forthwith, while the police found reasons for refusing exit *visas*

to any "debtors" to the Organisation who attempted to leave the country. Indeed Supremist tax collectors held a powerful weapon, so merchants of all nationalities became loud partisans of Bulgarian Revisionism and often found enthusiasm for Mihailov smoothed away business difficulties or turned State tax collectors from their doors. Even banks found advantage, too, in employing notorious Supremists or assassins who were technically "resting". But opponents of The Cause might seek work in vain; and one girl, who was reduced to destitution because the National Committee constantly prevented anybody from employing her, begged me to tell nobody when at last she found work.

In 1932 the Mihailovists discovered the drug traffic's possibilities. Even if they had not had partisans among the police, drugs yielded profit enough for bribes to ill-paid officials; and so, when discoveries in Egypt exposed the drug traffickers and other countries drove them out, many came to Bulgaria where they found eager collaborators. The cultivation of opium poppies (which thrive in Petritch Department) to supply controlled drugs for medical purposes was perfectly legitimate: and it was easy to increase the crops, supplement them by smuggling raw products from Turkey and even from South Serbia, open secret factories, sell the drugs to international traffickers, then smuggle them away. I knew one notorious woman smuggler well. Soon (reported the League of Nations Opium Advisory Committee) there were ten factories (in Sofia and Petritch Department) producing annually, under the noses of corrupt officials, enough acetic anhydride to make five tons of heroin. When representations were made to Bulgaria measures against the traffickers were ordered, but Mihailov's gangsters knew how to evade them. In December 1933 Mihailov wrote to collaborators that he had bought 2,326 kilograms of "the special product", adding: "If the dollar had not been de-valued we could undoubtedly have made a further 5-6,000,000 *leva*."

In July 1934, while fishing the tumbling streams and trout-filled tarns of the Pirin Mountains, I had many talks with peasants who had never seen a fly rod. But they had seen Mihailovist guns and their hatred of Mihailov was fanatical. "We don't believe the Serbs were ever so cruel as the Mihailovist bandits to us," they said. "We were desperately preparing to revolt. Thank God the new Government has ended their terror. Under Turkish rule things were never so bad. Now all we want is peace." It was the

same tale in Nevrokop; and there was great satisfaction when, while I slept at Bansko one night, troops caught Dinko Vassilev. The people talked with pride of Sandanski, Alexandrov, and Protogerov; but for Mihailov they had no good word.

A year later, with two Bulgarians and a German colleague, I motored through Greek Macedonia and South Serbia, having many talks with peasants as we mended punctures, wandered through the markets, or watched villagers in their fantastic costumes dancing wildly as African tribesmen at celebrations. Greek Macedonia was dreary, its roads fearful; and at a village near Banitza (a Bulgarophile stronghold under the Turks and Bulgarophile still rather than alien Greek) a man told us he was a Bulgar (meaning Slav) and that the Greeks beat children who spoke "Bulgarian"—for these Exarchist-educated Slavs would say: "We are Macedonians, but by the Church we are Bulgarians." Strange then, I thought, that the Bulgarian frontier sector commander at Strumitza had told me two years earlier how excellent were his relations with the Greek frontier officers, whereas with the Yugoslavs, to whom he could speak in his own tongue, he was demonstratively not upon speaking terms.

Yet in South Serbia the good roads led to developing towns, there were fewer police than in the Bulgarian provinces and no sense of fear, students sang Macedonian songs in the streets and people spoke freely—saying how hard life had been while terrorists from Sofia provoked the authorities but now conditions were vastly improving. Some owed to warm friendship with Mihailov's revolutionary opponents: but for Mihailov there was nothing but contempt.

In progressive Skoplje the Macedonian mayor, speaking his own dialect, showed us his splendid town and was welcomed with genuine affection by the people of villages we visited together.

At St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery we sat with the Macedonian Abbot, a Serbian high official from the Ministry of Agriculture, and an Inspector of Taxes from Dubrovnik, clinking glasses and gulping potent spirit, watching the Yugoslav patrols upon the high ridge before us, the Albanian border.

"This is a great day," said the Abbot; "for here we are, a Dalmatian, a Serb, a Macedonian, and Bulgarians—all friends together, all speaking the same language. But we

Macedonians have lived through hard times, for you Serbs were very harsh."

"We were harsh because the revolutionaries had friends among you," said the Serb. "Yet we respected Todor Alexandrov; but that Mihailov . . . bah! "

"But why did we fight among ourselves?" asked the Abbot.

"We built a Great Yugoslavia," answered the Serb.

"No you did not," retorted the Abbot hotly. "How can you speak of a Great Yugoslavia while millions of brother Slavs remain beyond the Bulgarian border? There will be no Great Yugoslavia till all are united as equal partners; and I curse the great King Alexander's murderers—the King talked here several times with me and he knew the two nations must get together. He worked for that and for that he was killed! "

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF BULGARIA

It was in A.D. 679 that a tribe of Attila's Huns were led over the Danube near its delta by their despotic Khan Asparouch. They were the Bulgars (or *Bugars*), a disagreeable people with Mongol features who buried their widows alive and offered human sacrifices to their gods. Wandering from Asiatic wastes, some 25,000 of them crossed the Danube while the Byzantine overlords of the Balkan Peninsula were defending Constantinople from the Saracens, overran the land between the Black Sea and River Isker, and established a fortified capital at Pliska.

A century earlier a horde of Slavs from Central Europe had swamped the Peninsula, absorbing the varied stocks they found there and giving a predominantly Slav character to the whole land between the Black Sea and Albanian Mountains; but they were peaceful folk scattered in tribes which lacked the cohesion necessary to resist Asparouch's capable and disciplined Bulgars. Yet the Bulgars were so few and such eager polygamists that within two centuries their racial identity was completely submerged. Even their language disappeared. But contemporary historians continued to call this hybrid race Bulgars because the Bulgars were the ruling caste. Another body of them in Croatia lost even their name.

The Byzantines, unable to drive out these predatory invaders, concluded an alliance with Asparouch's successor Tervel, who extended his domain south of the Balkan Mountains and westward to the River Timok; and in 718 he relieved Constantinople from the Saracens.

But all did not go well between the Slavs and their Bulgar overlords who raped their women and enslaved their children. The Slavs were numerous enough to impose friendship with Byzantium upon Tervel's successors; however, the warlike Bulgar nobles, objecting to this policy, assassinated two Khans and dethroned two others, though

they were routed by the Byzantines in 765; but by massacring Slav sympathisers with Byzantium, driving 250,000 of them into Thrace and Asia Minor and suppressing their tribal organisations, the Bulgars regained their ascendancy and were spoiling for rapine when Kroum became Khan in 803.

Kroum overran Transylvania and swept into Hungary. In 809 he captured Sofia, but the Byzantines drove him back and sacked his capital. In 811, however, Kroum annihilated the Byzantine army, slew the Emperor Nicephorus, and drank wine from his skull; then he defeated Emperor Michael, stormed Adrianople, unsuccessfully besieged Constantinople, and returned home with a host of prisoners, who were settled along the Danube, bringing culture and Christianity among their captors.

Kroum's son Omortag inherited in 814 a vast domain extending from the Balkan Mountains to to-day's northern borders of Roumania, to Croatia and eastern Hungary. He made terms with the Byzantines and built a new capital at Preslav; but the Serbs successfully resisted his successor's efforts to conquer them too.

The Byzantine Emperor Michael III, realising the Eastern (Byzantine) Church's political value, worked to convert the Macedonian Slav tribes to Christianity, his missionaries being ordered to teach in the Slav language. Most able among these missionaries were the monks Kyril and Methodius, natives of Salonika and probably of Slavonic stock, though their father Constantine was a Byzantine officer and Methodius had governed a Macedonian province for Byzantium; yet the Bulgarians claim them and venerate them as patron saints. In 862 Kyril devised an alphabet which would represent the hitherto unwritten Slav phonetics, thus originating the Slavonic (or Kyrillic) script.

Meanwhile Khan Boris, who had attacked Macedonia, was beset by the Emperor Michael while his domain was stricken with famine. Unable to resist, he accepted Michael's terms, one being that he should embrace Christianity; so he was baptised in 866—and eventually retired to a monastery; but the Bulgar nobles took hardly to Christianity, fearing it might deprive them of their privileges. The Byzantine (or Greek) Patriarch at Constantinople incorporated the Bulgar Church, though allowing its Archbishop to control its internal affairs. When Methodius (who had survived Kyril) died in 885 the missionaries he had been leading in Moravia fled

to Bulgaria where Boris engaged some to organise his church and train Bulgars for the priesthood: while others, headed by Monk Klement, encouraged by Boris and by Emperor Basil I, went in 886 to organise a Church in Macedonia. The Serbian Slavs had been converted by other followers of Methodius in 879.

Khan Simeon, who succeeded his father Boris in 893, raised his realm to a place among the great cultured nations of the earth. But he was filled with wild ambition. He wanted Constantinople and a mighty Bulgaro-Byzantine Empire. He carried fire and sword through Thrace, Albania and Macedonia, massacring, plundering, and levying tribute, burning Byzantine churches and cutting off prisoners' noses; he besieged Constantinople in vain in 914, crushed a popular revolt in 923 against his warlike policy: then he invited the Serb nobles to a banquet, butchered them, and swept through their lands, destroying everything he could.

In Macedonia, where Christianity (under Byzantine patronage) had grown much stronger than in Bulgaria, Simeon encouraged Monk Klement to establish an Archbishopric at Okhrid, calling it the "Bulgarian Patriarchate" and extending its jurisdiction throughout his domain. Then in 925 he proclaimed himself Tsar of the Bulgars and Greeks, insolently demanding a triumphal entry into Constantinople. But his army was annihilated in Croatia, whereupon he besought the Pope's intervention and thus escaped the consequences of his folly; and before he died in 927 the conciliatory Byzantines acknowledged him Tsar of the Bulgarians. To-day the Bulgarians are proud of Simeon, but he had scourged alike his people and his neighbours. To win a title he had exhausted his realm and sacrificed Transylvania to the Magyars. To consolidate his personal power he had pampered the Bulgar nobles and clergy who had combined to rob the peasants, growing fat and demoralised by this despoliation. Demoralisation foreshadowed disintegration.

Simeon's son Petar allied himself with Byzantium and created a Patriarchate for Bulgaria proper independent of the Patriarchate at Okhrid; but the Bulgar nobles rebelled, reducing his realm to anarchy. The Magyars five times ravaged the land; then came the Russians who captured Petar's son and successor Boris II, seized Preslav, and massacred Plovdiv's 20,000 citizens. The Byzantines drove the Rus-

sians back in 971, liberated Boris, deposed him, and annexed his realm. The First Bulgarian Empire ceased to exist.

But in 963 the Macedonian Slavs, led by a local notable, Nikola Shishman, had driven out their Bulgar oppressors, proclaiming Shishman their King and Presba their capital; but when the Byzantines annexed the Bulgarian Empire they sent an army to occupy Macedonia. Meantime Shishman died and three of his sons were murdered—the last by their youngest brother, Samuel, who dreamed of restoring the Bulgarian Empire.

In 976, having defeated the Byzantines, Samuel proclaimed himself “Tsar of the Bulgarians” and made Okhrid his capital. The Macedonian Church’s headquarters were at Okhrid; and the title was chosen for prestige, the name Macedonia having sunk into contemporary oblivion. In 986 Samuel thrust the Byzantines from Bulgaria proper and annexed it, drove south into Thessaly, then occupied Serbia (a land of kindred Slavs) which became an autonomous State under his son-in-law. But Samuel’s glory was short-lived. The Emperor Basil II reconquered Bulgaria, then annihilated Samuel’s Macedonian army near Belassitza Mountain in 1014. Basil put out the eyes of 15,000 prisoners, though sparing to each hundredth one eye by which he might lead back his comrades to their Tsar. At the sight of this awful procession Samuel died of grief and rage. The Bulgar and Macedonian Patriarchates became Archbishoprics under the Greek Patriarchate again (the Archbishopric of Okhrid embracing Serbia).

Between 1048 and 1079 some 1,500,000 Petchenegs and Kumans crossed the frozen Danube, the Byzantines letting them settle in Bulgaria and Thrace. These hordes scarcely penetrated Macedonia beyond Kumanovo; but they altered the character of regions which are Bulgaria to-day, submerging the old Bulgaro-Slavonic stock—though the Church’s great influence and established usage preserved the Bulgar name and Slavonic language. Indeed the modern Bulgarians are the product of twenty different stocks (grafted upon a Slavonic stem) as their varying racial types indicate.

The Byzantine Empire’s decline encouraged the Kuman brothers Assen, Petar and Kaloyan, to head a revolt of Kumans and Bulgaro-Slavs along the Danube. Within ten years Assen and Petar were in turn assassinated; but in 1186 Kaloyan became “Tsar of the Bulgars and Wallachs”, proclaimed the Bulgar Church independent once again and at

length forced the Byzantines to acknowledge the independence of Bulgaria proper. The siege of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1202 gave Kaloyan the opportunity to drive the Byzantines from the whole country between Prizren and the borders of Thessaly and place the proud Archbishopric of Okhrid under the Bulgar Patriarchate again; then he allied himself with the Byzantines against Baldwin of Flanders, the new "Emperor of the East", whom he routed and captured at Adrianople in 1205, incarcerating him at Trnovo, Bulgaria's new capital. In 1207 Kaloyan was assassinated while besieging Salonika. His nephew, who succeeded him, concluded an alliance with the Franks; but he failed to crush the rising power of Serbia and lost Macedonia to the Epirots. Then he was deposed by Kaloyan's son Assen in 1218.

Assen II, who styled himself "Tsar of the Bulgars and Greeks", defeated and captured the Emperor Theodore Komnenus, Despot of Epirus, in 1230, annexing Thrace and Macedonia again and conquering parts of Albania and Serbia; he built many churches and monasteries and Trnovo rivalled Constantinople in splendour. But his Empire declined after his death in 1241. His eldest son, who lost Thrace and Macedonia again, was poisoned in 1246; but though his second son recovered Macedonia for two years from 1254, the Bulgars were finally driven out by the resuscitated Byzantines, while the Tartars came over the Danube and exacted tribute.

Then the remainder of this short-lived second Bulgarian Empire disintegrated. Michael Assen was assassinated in 1257 by his cousin Kaliman who thought to consolidate himself by marrying Michael's wife: whereupon her father, a Russian prince, hurried with a Magyar army to rescue the unwilling lady. Kaliman was chased from Trnovo and murdered. Constantine, cousin of King Urosh of Serbia, was elected in Kaliman's stead; but the Magyars routed him at Plevna and established princes of their own choosing to rule his western lands, while the Byzantines reconquered all that remained to him south of the Balkan Mountains. Still the Bulgar nobles continued to be preoccupied with their privy intrigues, so the Tartars again crossed the Danube; whereupon Ivailo, a peasant, rallying the country-folk, drove back the marauders, defeated the hated nobles, slew the worthless Constantine, occupied Trnovo, and married Constantine's widow, but was eventually done to death by the Tartars,

The nobles then enthroned George Terter, a Kuman, who made terms with the Tartars; but he could not hold the nobles and several carved out principalities for themselves. So the Tartar Khan Tsaka swept into north-eastern Bulgaria, drove Terter away, and had himself crowned at Trnovo. But Terter's son Svetoslav, who had married another Tartar chieftain's daughter, evicted Tsaka and was proclaimed Tsar in 1295; with Tartar aid he fought the revolting Bulgar nobles and encroaching Byzantines with some success and died in 1322. His son, who reigned for a year, recaptured Plovdiv before emulating his father's really remarkable feat of dying a natural death. Next, the Kuman ruler of Vidin, Michael Shishman, wedded to the Serbian King Stefan "Detchanski's" sister, was elected Tsar; he beat the advancing Byzantines and allied himself with them, then put away his Serbian wife and attacked Serbia: but at Velbuzd (Kustendil) he was routed and slain in 1330. Whereupon the Bulgarians submitted to Serbia.

That Bulgaria found place in history before Serbia is undoubtedly due to the Bulgars' obedience to their early Khans. Under these Khans they had terrorised and welded together the Slavs of Bulgaria proper, whereas the Slavs elsewhere had led an easy village life while their headmen squabbled and fought until at last foreign dangers promoted union.

Between 1169 and 1196 Stefan Nemanya, Governor-elect of Novi Bazar, rallied the Slavs of Bosnia, Montenegro and western Serbia and in 1219 the Serbian Church (under the Archbishopric of Okhrid since 1018) was proclaimed an independent Patriarchate at Ipek. In 1258 the Serbian King Urosh took Skoplje, Prilip and Kitchevo from the Byzantines though they drove him out again three years later; but in 1282 King Milutin made Skoplje his capital and extended his realm from Dibra to Kavalla. His supposed remains are preserved as sacred relics in the Cathedral of Sveti Nedelia (or Sveti Kralj—meaning the Holy King) at Sofia.

Under King Stefan "Dushan" the Serbs conquered the whole Balkan Peninsula to the borders of Epirus. But while they let Bulgaria proper retain her autonomy and her Patriarchate, Slavonic Macedonia became an integral part of Serbia and the Archbishopric of Okhrid passed under the Serbian Patriarchate. Numerous churches were built and monasteries endowed, these remaining islands of Serbo-Slavonic culture through the centuries.

After the battle of Velbuzd King Dushan set his brother-

in-law Ivan Alexander, Tsar Shishman's nephew, upon the throne of Bulgaria. Alexander proved a capable ruler but was soon beset by the oncoming Turks. When he died he divided his realm between his sons, giving Vidin to one and Trnovo to the other; but within a year Trnovo was reduced to vassalage by the Sultan.

Meantime the Serbian Empire had crumbled under Dushan's feeble son Urosh, the local governors declaring independence. Serbian power was crushed at the battle of Kossovo in 1389 and a Serbo-Bulgarian army routed near Adrianople in 1391. The celebrated *Kraljevitch* Marko of Serbian ballads, who ruled in Macedonia, had to accept Turkish suzerainty, though Macedonian autonomy was not finally extinguished until 1413. All Bulgaria was already subdued. A Bulgaro-Hungarian army was routed at Nikopol in 1396; and in 1444 King Vladislaus of Hungary and Poland, marching to save the Balkan Christians, was routed and slain at Varna.

The Turks, though poor administrators, were generous conquerors whose coming stopped perpetual strife. Districts which accepted their faith might govern themselves; from these autonomous stocks sprang the Pomaks. To certain inaccessible towns of the central Balkan Mountains the Turks extended like privilege for tribute or a service, these towns preserving their Christianity and traditions and eventually rearing the revolutionary heroes of the Bulgarian renaissance. But the Bulgar clergy, fearing less for their flocks than their riches, had fled to Wallachia; so in 1394 the Turks reduced the abandoned Patriarchate of Trnovo to an Archbishopric, under the Greek Patriarchate which was preserved at Constantinople as an intermediary between Moslems and Christians. The Serb Patriarchate was suppressed in 1459 too, the Serbian Church passing under the Archbishopric of Okhrid which maintained (under the Greek Patriarchate's control) autonomy and Slav minor clergy.

But in 1557 a Serbian Grand Vizir restored the Serb Patriarchate, extending its jurisdiction to Slovenia in the north-west, to Shtip and Radovichté in Macedonia, and east to Samokov, though leaving to the Archbishopric of Okhrid the Bitolje, Prilip and Dibra regions. The Serbo-Macedonian revolt in 1689 and the emigration northward, when the revolt failed and the Austrian armies retired, of 100,000 Slavs from Old Serbia and northern Macedonia were

organised by this Patriarchate which had led among the people a great literary revival; but it was not until 1766 that the Serbian Patriarchate was suppressed at the insistence of the Greek Patriarchate which worked to Hellenise the Balkan Christians. The Slav liturgy was abolished and native clergy gradually ousted by Greeks. The same befell the Archbishopric of Okhrid in 1767.

But the Serbian Patriarchate had preserved Serbian nationalism. Within fifty years Kara George and Milan Obrenovitch had raised the standard of revolt, many Macedonian Slavs rallying to it: and by 1817 a tiny Serbia had won autonomy. Though the Serbs declared their Church autonomous they did not restore their Patriarchate, finding it politic to limit their Church's jurisdiction by their territorial boundaries and let it remain under the spiritual authority of the Greek Patriarchate which enjoyed Russian benevolence. In 1878 Serbia became completely independent and thenceforward played a difficult role, the Piedmont of the South Slavs, sometimes with Austria-Hungary and sometimes against, until the Yugoslav Kingdom emerged from the World War.

But the Bulgars, without any national institution since 1394, sunk in apathy and ignorance and isolated by the Balkan and Rila Mountains, never emigrated and never revolted. As a nation they were forgotten—a lost race; but their name survived them, the term *bugar* being widely used to denote a mere peasant, an uncouth or simple *rayah*, and eventually passing into our own language with a narrow and obscene meaning.

The Slav peasants of the Balkan Peninsula, held to Christianity only by superstition, were shamelessly exploited by the degraded Greek priesthood of a corrupt Church which connived at witchcraft and pagan customs and taught that robbery or deception of Moslems was no sin. The Greek Patriarchate, which was interested only in making all native Christians believe themselves Greeks, sold bishoprics and parishes to anyone who could pay; and the purchasers, caring only for the fees they could extort from their flocks, summoned to their aid the legions of devils and vampires of pagan times and leagued themselves with local witches to terrify the peasants who only endured them for fear. Atheism spread; while the Bulgarian practice of knotting a handkerchief to imprison the malevolent spirit of any priest met on the road originated in those days.

The Levantine merchants and the tax-farmers were major scourges too. The merchants were Greeks or Hellenised Slavs with nimble wits and no scruples who gained control of all commerce from the slow Turks, robbing alike the Treasury and the peasants. The Christian Slavs—who might rise to the highest places if they would—all called themselves Greeks, for their Church and clergy and schools were Greek, and their commercial and cultural language Greek; these renegades were ashamed to be Slavs for the Slav was a labourer, a *bugar* or *rayah*, a serf who tilled the soil and gave half its yield to a Moslem overlord, whereas the Greek could read and write and rob from an office, a privileged aristocrat who dwelt in towns, sheltered by the Capitulations, pampered by foreign traders and Consuls. The Macedonian Slav monk Paissi, writing history in a Serbian monastery upon Mount Athos in 1762, scornfully reproached them for forgetting their race and native tongue.

The Christian peasants paid tithes or taxes upon all produce they did not surrender to landlords, and upon their emaciated live-stock too. Upon paper these taxes were moderate; but the Turks, to get this much from a land of dishonest officials, sold tax-collecting rights, by districts, to the highest bidders; and these parasites, generally Christian notables, would go around with a gendarme or a bey's armed retainers, extorting all they could. They were seldom content with 50% profit. Their influence with corrupt junior officials stifled appeals by the peasants who were consequently little disposed to produce more than they need. Nor were the Moslem peasants in practice better off, though they despised the Christians' demoralisation.

Such conditions bred bandits and outlaws. The outlaws, called *Haiduks*, men who had resisted some injustice, were often idealists, the heroes of many ballads, Robin Hoods who preyed upon rich magnates; they would help the poor, terrorise the rapacious and enforce rude justice in their localities.

Serbia's renaissance stirred the Macedonian Slavs, and emigrants to Serbia returned with Serbian books to open schools. Already in 1813 there were schools at Veles and Prilip, a printing-press at Salonika in 1838, while towards 1850 (before Bulgarian propaganda began) there were thirty schools between Bansko and Okhrid.

But the Serbs' renaissance and the Greeks' insurrection

(in 1821) hardened the Turks against their Slav subjects who, stirred by these events, began turning to Russia, since 1774 the acknowledged protectress of Orthodox Christians. In Russia some Balkan Slav students inspired a Slovak scholar called Venelin to study their history and in 1830 he was sent to the Balkans by Russian scientists. Finding the unliberated Slav peasants called themselves *Bugars* (*Bugarin*), though the name had lost all national significance, this imaginative enthusiast called them all Bulgars. This name, having an historical precedent while marking a convenient distinction from the liberated Serbs, found favour with cartographers, diplomats, and even with the Serbs themselves, being certainly more appropriate than the name "Greeks" by which the Turks knew all their Orthodox Christian subjects.

Venelin fired Bulgarian students with patriotic zeal, while rich Bulgar merchants, finding it no longer paid to call themselves Greeks in Turkey, subscribed for Bulgarian schools and for books in a medley of Russian characters. The first Bulgarian school opened at Gabrovo in 1835 and soon there were over two hundred in Bulgaria. Committees were formed in Bucharest, Belgrade, Constantinople and in Russia, young Bulgars went to foreign universities, and soon these nationalists had convinced themselves that Alexander the Great and most other Balkan celebrities too were among their forebears.

But the Bulgar peasants were unmoved, the *chorbadjis* (headmen) often openly hostile. Captain Mamartchev, who had led Bulgarian volunteers with the Russians against Turkey in 1829, twice failed to raise the standard of revolt, for no revolt could succeed unless the people were prepared. So the nationalists worked to re-establish the Bulgarian Church—whereupon the Greek Bishop of Trnovo burnt the old Bulgar Patriarchate's library (in 1825).

For liberation from the Greek Patriarchate and the right to have their own language in their churches the people were eager everywhere, the Greek bishops' and priests' tyranny provoking violent protests from the old Serb Bishops of Skoplje and Samokov in 1828. The agitation grew till the people in many places expelled their Greek priests; then several Bulgarian leaders veered towards the Uniate Church which was allied with Rome but used the Slavonic ritual and had already gained many adherents in southern Macedonia. Alarmed by this manœuvre which threatened their influence over the Balkan Slavs, the Russians kidnapped

the Uniate Patriarch and espoused the Bulgarian cause.

The Porte, exasperated with the rebellious Serbs and Greeks, had encouraged the Bulgarian agitation to weaken the Patriarchate (fountain of Greek nationalism) and forestall the expansion of the Serbian Church's influence, for the Bulgarians were docile and still politically apathetic, their leaders protesting loyalty to Turkey. On March 10, 1870, at Russian instigation, the Porte proclaimed a Bulgarian Exarchate with headquarters at Constantinople and no obligation to the Patriarchate beyond consultation upon matters of faith. The Patriarchate proclaimed it a schismatic Church.

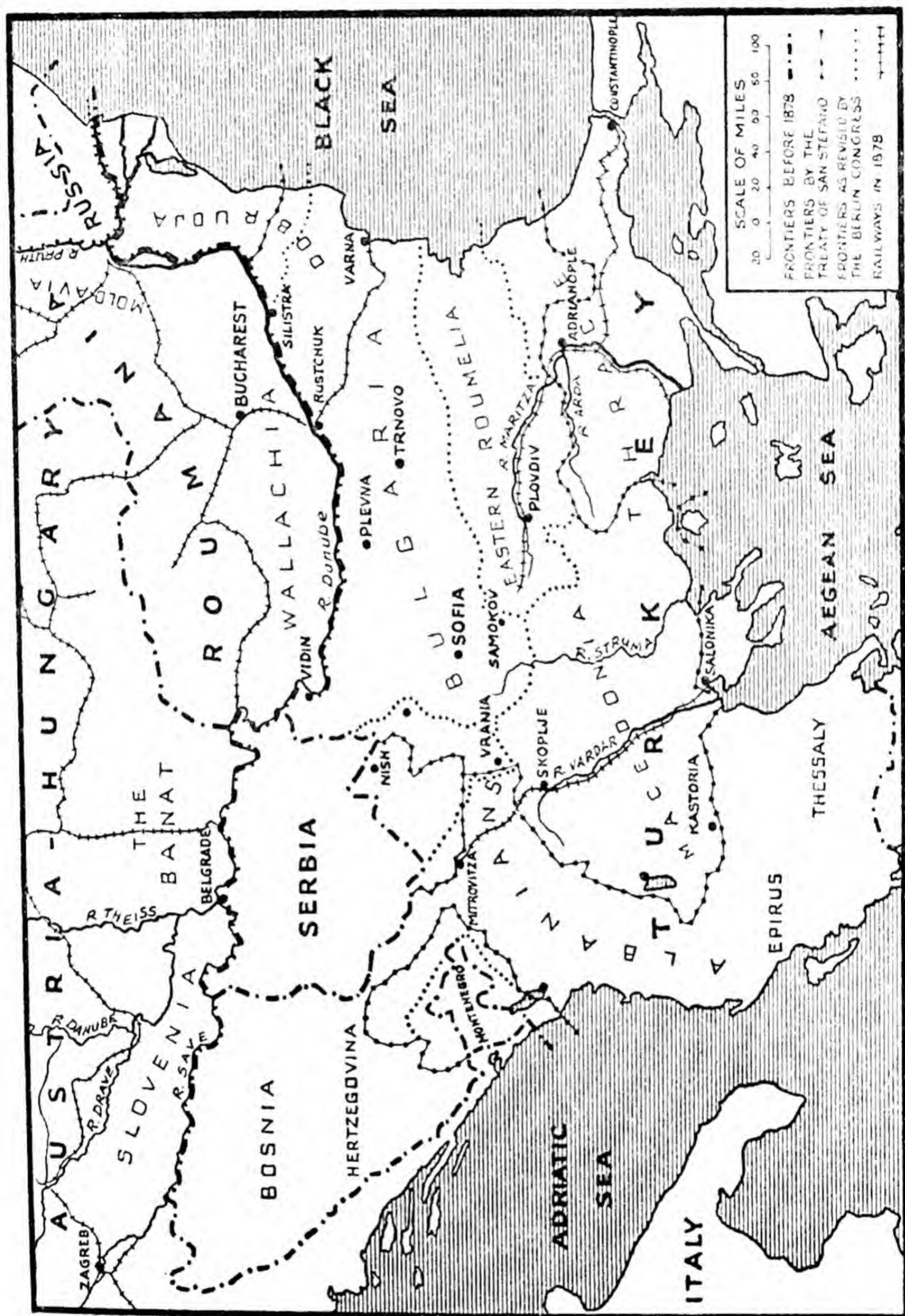
The Porte gave the Exarchate jurisdiction over all Bulgaria proper and Eastern Roumelia, also over Nish, Pirot, Vidin, Samokov, Kustendil, and Veles which had been bishoprics under the Serbian Patriarchate until 1766: moreover a clause provided that if two-thirds of the population of other districts so desired they should also pass under the Exarchate. Little propaganda or coercion by Bulgarians or Turks was needed to induce the Macedonian Slavs to opt for the (Slavonic) Exarchate which promised an end of (Greek) priestly extortion, so in 1872 Okhrid and Skoplje passed under the Exarchate and the people were told they were now Bulgars. Serbian protests and Serbophile petitions for Serbian clergy were in vain; moreover Serbia's continued allegiance to the Greek Patriarchate had disappointed the Macedonian Slavs.

To Russia the Exarchate was a channel through which Austro-Hungarian designs might be checked and Russian influence spread among the Balkan Slavs; so money poured into Exarchist coffers, Bulgarian Christianity became a political conspiracy, the churches became secret meeting-places. Under Russian auspices revolutionary committees in Constantinople and printing-presses at Trnovo, Shumen and Plovdiv poured forth sedition before the eyes of easy-going authorities. Yet many Bulgarians preferred autonomy under the Sultan to independence under autocratic Russia's protection, though joining with the Young Turks in demanding radical reforms within an Empire which lagged behind the times. But even more Bulgarians were enthusiastic for the union of Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro within a Serbo-Bulgarian State. Indeed agreements had been concluded in Bucharest in 1867 between the Bulgarian National Committee and representatives of Serbia and

Roumania, whereby these States should liberate the Balkan Slavs who would be united with Serbia under Prince Michael—though Roumania would take the Dobrudja as her price. The Bulgarian revolutionary heroes were welcomed in Belgrade, where Sava Rakovski, Luben Karavelov, Anghel Kantchev, Stefan Karadja, Vassil Levski, Christo Botev and many more found sympathy and aid, for they all felt themselves Slavs at bottom and many had fought against the Turks in 1862-7. Heroically they stirred three abortive revolts and led innumerable daring exploits, nor did the treachery of later days stain their fair names; theirs was the idealism of men bred in the freedom of the Balkan Mountains.

But in 1876 revolt flared up in Bosnia and Hertzegovina: Serbia and Montenegro declared war upon Turkey, the Serbian army marched upon Nish and Vrania, the Kumanovo-Kratovo district rose in sympathy; but the revolts were crushed, the Serbs beaten, their churches and sixty-one schools in Macedonia closed. Meantime Bulgarian bands had crossed the Danube from Roumania, compelled the Christians of Panagurichte and Koprivtchitza to revolt (burning out those who held back) and attacked Moslem settlements. But there were too few rebels. With the Turkish authorities' connivance the infuriated Moslem Pomaks retaliated, massacring quite 6,000 Christian men, women and children, many of them in a little church at Batak. Whereupon Gladstone, arising in generous wrath, denounced all that was Turkish. Europe was roused and Russia's opportunity had come. But the pernicious "Batak tradition" was created, for the Bulgarian Nationalists discovered that a massacre of Christians by Moslems was grand propaganda.

A Conference of Ambassadors at Constantinople agreed in December 1876 that Turkish territory between the Black Sea and Albanian Mountains should be divided into two self-governing provinces under Christian governors, with Trnovo and Sofia as their respective capitals. The people were delighted at this arrangement which promised freedom from rapacious landlords and tax-farmers. But the Porte demurred. Thereupon Russia declared war on April 24, 1877, being joined by Roumania, Serbia and Montenegro. At the historic siege of Plevna and desperate struggles upon the Shipka Pass Bulgarian volunteers took part, but there was no widespread rising against the Turks who had many friends among the peasants.



In March 1878 victorious Russia dictated at San Stefano a treaty which united the two provinces proposed by the Ambassadors (except the Dobrudja, which was awarded to Roumania) in one Great Bulgaria; but a Congress at Berlin abrogated this treaty, granting autonomy (under a Prince) only to Bulgaria proper and the Sofia district, while the Ambassadors' plan was applied to Eastern Roumelia. The Northern Dobrudja (only) went to Roumania. Bosnia and Hertzegovina became autonomous under Turkish suzerainty and the auspices of Austria-Hungary which occupied them and the Sanjak of Novi Bazar (a corridor leading towards Macedonia); but Russia opposed Macedonian autonomy, fearing the Macedonians would veer towards Serbia (then Austria-Hungary's protégé) if autonomous before being Bulgarised, for there had been numerous petitions for Macedonian union with Serbia (which now extended to Vrania). So Macedonia remained under Turkish rule.

Prince Alexander of Battenberg, nephew of the Russian Tsar Alexander II, who was chosen in 1879 by an Extraordinary Sobranié at Trnovo to rule the Bulgarian Principality, was an inexperienced youth of twenty-two. He found Sofia (the chosen Capital) dominated by a Russian Commissioner (Prince Dondoukov-Korsakov) and Russian officials of questionable integrity whose tutelage was resented.

To allay bickerings he suspended the Constitution; but in July 1884 he allowed free elections which brought into power Petko Karavelov, unsuccessful advocate of a Customs Union with Serbia. Karavelov secretly conspired to unite Eastern Roumelia with Bulgaria. On September 18, 1885, his friends in Plovdiv seized the Bulgarophile Christian Governor-General and proclaimed the Union. Prince Alexander, who had promised he would not disturb the *status quo*, had not been consulted but could hardly repudiate the accomplished fact of union which stirred wild enthusiasm; yet Russia, exasperated at premature action which aroused European suspicion of her intention to Bulgarise Macedonia through the Exarchate and ultimately create a Great Bulgaria under her control (the San Stefano plan), withdrew her military instructors from the raw Bulgarian Army, leaving it almost without officers.

The Army had been concentrated to meet an expected Turkish invasion of rebellious Roumelia, but Turkey was restrained by the Western Powers and accepted the union.

However, the Serbian King Milan, secret ally of Austria-Hungary since 1881, demanded Vidin in compensation for Bulgaria's increased strength and led his army upon Sofia; but the Bulgarians, led by the gallant Prince Alexander, routed the Serbs at Slivnitsa and Pirot and were only halted there by Austro-Hungarian threats. Peace was concluded at Bucharest in March 1886: and though neither country gained materially, Serbia's wanton aggression opened a bitter feud while Bulgaria's remarkable victory raised her prestige throughout the world.

The Russians now agitated violently against Prince Alexander whose independent conduct, they pretended, deprived isolated Bulgaria of their protection. Fear of losing Russian support for the Great Bulgaria project inspired certain impetuous officers (among them Alexander Protogerov and Radko Dimitriev) to break into the Palace in the dead night of August 21, 1886, compel the Prince to sign his abdication, and hustle him out of the country; then these conspirators found themselves almost unsupported and fled—but were eventually pardoned.

On August 29 the Prince was recalled. But at the instigation of a Russian Consul who convinced him Bulgaria's welfare depended upon Russia's goodwill, he unselfishly offered to abdicate afresh if the Tsar so desired. The Tsar (Alexander III) told him to be gone; so he went, leaving a Council of Regency in his place. Another Russian Commissioner, General Kaulbars, now came to Sofia; but in defiance of him the Sobranié chose Prince Waldemar of Denmark to succeed Alexander, whereupon all the Russians departed again. Then Prince Waldemar declined the throne. So Bulgaria had neither Prince nor protectress.

It was not easy to find another Prince. The Liberal Stefan Stambulov, strong man of the Regency, invited the Sultan to become Prince of Bulgaria, his masterly idea being a Balkan Federation under Turkish suzerainty; but the Sultan rejected it for fear of Russia. King Charles of Roumania declined the throne of a Dual Monarchy too, for the same reason. Finally, a Republic being considered unworkable, the Regency hesitantly accepted Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha who was elected Prince by Extraordinary Sobranié at Trnovo on July 22, 1887; and while no Power particularly favoured him, Great Britain, Austria-Hungary and Italy restrained Russia from intervention against him, though Russia for nine years declined to recog-

nise him which prevented the Courts of Europe from receiving him.

At Prince Ferdinand's invitation Stambulov conducted an election so unscrupulously that few Russophiles obtained seats in the Sobranié. Whereupon there began a fierce agitation against Ferdinand, the bishops declined to pray for him, and Stambulov was confronted by a series of serious mutinies (the most notable being led by the Macedonian Major Panitza) which he crushed with a heavy hand. Then Stambulov was shot at in Sofia and the Finance Minister with him (Beltchev) killed. A year later the Bulgarian representative at Constantinople (Vulkovitch) was killed too, by Russophiles. Enraged, Stambulov turned upon his adversaries ruthlessly and indiscriminately. The moderate Russophile Karavelov and his chief friends, though innocent, were tortured to admit complicity in the assassinations, though Karavelov denied to foreign representatives who visited him in gaol that he had been ill-treated, wishing to spare his country that shame.

Yet Stambulov was a great statesman who raised his country to a high level of efficiency; and he sought Turkey's friendship, believing it would best further Bulgaria's economic and political interests and regaining through it the predominant position in Macedonia of which the Turks had deprived the Exarchate (to the Patriarchate's advantage) after the abortive conspiracy by Exarchist clergy in 1880. Russia tried to counteract Stambulov's independent policy in 1889 by inspiring Serbia to seek alliance with Bulgaria against Turkey to partition Macedonia, a project Austria-Hungary encouraged too, having concluded with Serbia in 1887 a secret treaty whereby Serbia should compensate herself at Turkey's expense for the loss of Bosnia and Hertze-govina; but Stambulov rejected this proposal, and a like one from Greece in 1891.

By persuading the Sobranié to agree that the Prince's heir might be reared in the Roman Catholic faith. Stambulov made possible Ferdinand's marriage to the Roman Catholic Princess Marie of Bourbon and Parma in 1893; but while Stambulov thus angered the Exarchate, the crafty Prince would not lose prestige for the sake of his pledges to the Pope and to his wife: so Prince Boris, who was born on January 30, 1894, was baptised into the Orthodox Church in February 1896.

Realising too late his error in bringing the insufferable

Ferdinand to Bulgaria, Stambulov planned with the War Minister to suppress the royal prerogative of appointing and promoting army officers, which Ferdinand was abusing to create a belligerent military clique of his own satellites; but Ferdinand cunningly embroiled Stambulov with the War Minister in a domestic scandal, then dismissed the latter and put in his place his favourite General, Ratcho Petrov, whose corruption inspired many ribald songs and jests.

Ferdinand would not yield his prerogatives and feared Stambulov might revive his Balkan Federation plan; moreover Russia would not recognise him while Stambulov ruled, and he was incited against "his Bismarck" by the German Emperor too. So he resolved to be rid of Stambulov. Among his allies he had the Bulgarised Macedonian immigrants who hated Stambulov because he would not tolerate their interference, despised their treachery, and argued that the people of Macedonia should work out their own destiny. Ferdinand incited the Opposition against Stambulov who thereupon tendered his resignation on May 18, 1894, thinking the Prince would not dare drop his pilot. But a secret subterranean passage between the Palace and the Russian Legation had been well used. Stambulov's resignation was accepted, the Conservative Stoilov took his place, and Russia recognised Ferdinand who thereafter reigned supreme with depraved politicians as his pawns.

Stoilov's Cabinet of buccaneers won elections by force, dismissed Stambulov's officials *en masse*, and only dropped the prosecution of Stambulov and his friends for dishonesty when they found it would expose their own shocking corruption; but they declared Stambulov had arranged his Minister Beltchev's murder to have a pretext for crushing his opponents, yet kept in gaol Karavelov and his friends (whom Stambulov had imprisoned for alleged complicity in that murder) in case they should oppose Stoilov! Stambulov, muzzled in Bulgaria, retorted through the Foreign Press, violently attacking Ferdinand; whereupon he was murdered. On July 2, 1895, he was attacked in a Sofia street, and though wearing mail beneath his coat his arms were hacked off before anyone could intervene. As he lay dying he accused Ferdinand of instigating this attack which, upon secret instructions, the police had facilitated. There were demonstrations against the British, German and Austro-Hungarian Legations which protested; and the Greek, Roumanian and Turkish Vice-Consuls were wounded during riots

at his funeral. Stambulov's murderers were Macedonian immigrants who shortly added to their victims Aleko Konstantinov, the celebrated novelist, who had dared taunt his compatriots for their uncouth manners and exaggerated ambitions.

Stambulov's fall ended Bulgaro-Turkish friendship and both countries sought understanding with Serbia who was looking for allies against Austria-Hungary, finding her national aspirations hopelessly at variance with Austro-Hungarian ambition for an outlet upon the Aegean Sea and a free route to the East. In 1897 King Milan Obrenovitch visited Sofia and a Customs Union was arranged, Bulgarian and Serbian spheres of influence in Macedonia and Old Serbia being defined. But Austria-Hungary threatened Serbia with economic blockade if this agreement was ratified and Bulgaria with severance of diplomatic relations unless Stoilov apologised, while Russia stood discreetly aside—indeed between 1895 and 1906 Russia and Austria-Hungary contrived a self-denying collaboration in the Balkans. Both Serbia and Bulgaria gave way; whereupon Austria-Hungary concluded with Stoilov a secret agreement whereby, should Turkey-in-Europe be partitioned, Bulgaria would claim no territory west of the Struma River but should have eastern Serbia (Pirot, Nish and Vrania), while Austria-Hungary pledged herself to uphold Ferdinand and his dynasty. Bulgaria's neutrality during the Greco-Turkish War (1897) was rewarded by four more bishoprics for her Exarchate and other concessions in Macedonia.

In January 1899 Ferdinand tired of the Stoilov Cabinet; but the new Government (of the chauvinist Radoslavov's partisans) provoked serious disorders in the provinces by attempting to reimpose tithes, while Macedonian immigrants caused trouble with Roumania. In 1901 Ferdinand put Ratcho Petrov at the helm, but his supporters promptly became involved in a financial scandal; whereupon the Prince, planning to exploit Russian benevolence again, allowed free elections which returned the Russophiles Karavelov and Danev, though Karavelov resigned when vested interests successfully resisted his tobacco monopoly plan. Danev had Radoslavov and his colleagues condemned for abuses while in power, legislated against the dismissal of Civil Servants for political reasons, and in 1902 signed a military alliance with Russia to counter-balance the treaty Austria-Hungary had concluded with Roumania in 1901.

This alliance with Russia coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of Bulgaria's liberation, so celebrations upon the Shipka Pass were attended by an imposing Russian military delegation; then Ferdinand visited Petrograd. Whereupon Ferdinand's Macedonian immigrant friends, counting upon Russian support, redoubled revolutionary activities in Turkey; but Russia had her own troubles in the Far East so Danev suspended the revolutionary organisations in Bulgaria. Irritated, the immigrants were further enraged to find that Russia, wishing to win Serbian sympathy, supported the Serbian Church's claim to the Bishopric of Skoplje; whereupon violent agitation forced Danev to resign in May 1903. Ferdinand thereupon installed an Austrophile Cabinet under Ratcho Petrov who encouraged the disastrous Ilinden rising in Macedonia. Petrov repealed Danev's law stabilising Civil Servants, filled administrative posts with his own partisans and faked elections; then Radoslavov and his colleagues were amnestied, immense orders for war materials were placed abroad, Ferdinand and his satellites prospered on percentages.

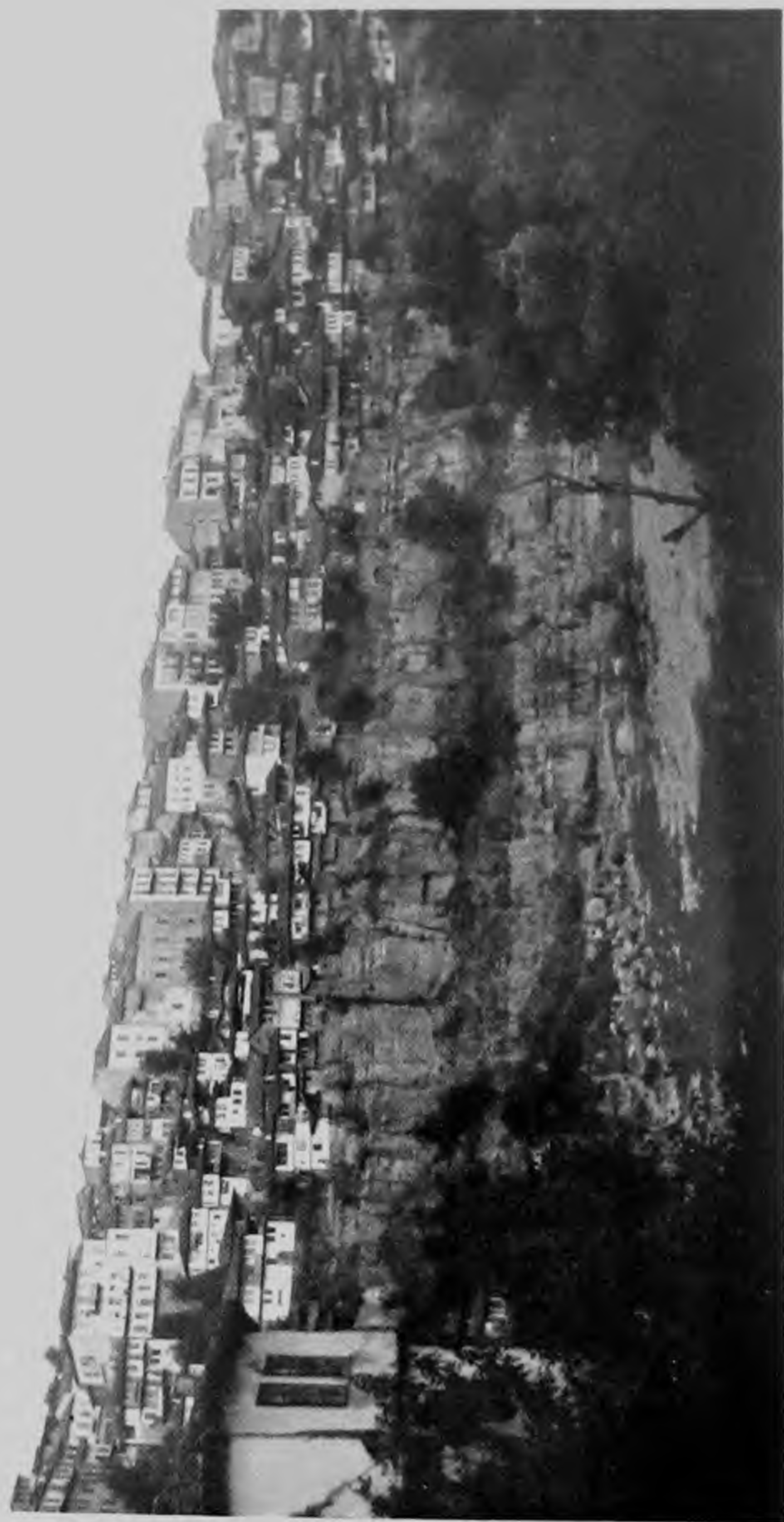
Dimiter Petkov, who eventually succeeded Ratcho Petrov, negotiated a secret treaty with Serbia whereby Bulgaria would grant rail facilities to the sea for Serbia's exports, while Serbia agreed not to oppose Bulgarian claims in Macedonia south of the Skoplje district. Negotiations were concluded at Nish in 1906. But Supremists agitated so violently against an arrangement which abandoned Skoplje to Serbia (assassinating Petkov and his Minister of Education Pechev in Sofia to mark their displeasure) that when Austria-Hungary protested against it too, offering Serbia equivalent advantages for her export trade, it was dropped.

In 1907 Russia agreed to help Bulgaria obtain an outlet upon the Aegean Sea east of the Struma River, but her defeat by Japan had weakened Bulgarian respect for her. Macedonian immigrants meanwhile attacked Greek settlements in Bulgaria in retaliation for Greek bands' outrages in Macedonia; there were strikes, student riots, and demonstrations against Ferdinand whose unprincipled methods had caused the Opposition parties to unite under Alexander Malinov, a Democrat of rare honesty who became Prime Minister in January 1908 and brought the Government he ousted to trial for their misdeeds.

During the summer of 1908 Turkey was in the throes of revolution, a situation Ferdinand and the Emperor Francis Joseph, meeting at Budapest in September, agreed to exploit.

Finding his pretext in a discourtesy to the Bulgarian representative at Constantinople, Ferdinand proclaimed Bulgaria's complete independence, at Trnovo on October 5, 1908, assuming the title: Tsar of the Bulgarians; while Austria-Hungary simultaneously annexed Bosnia and Hertzegovina—a crushing blow at Serbia's national aspirations. Russia restrained Turkey from attacking Bulgaria, paying the difference between the indemnity Turkey demanded and the amount Bulgaria agreed to find.

Thus Bulgaria became an independent Sovereign State.



A view of Trnovo, ancient capital of Bulgaria

CHAPTER III

THE INTERNAL MACEDONIAN REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

IN 1878 the Macedonian Christian Slavs were ready to call themselves Bulgars or Serbs or even Hottentots if only they were freed from Turkish rule; but the Berlin Congress cheated them—they remained under Turkey. And Russia was sore because her plan for a Great (Russophile) Bulgaria blocking Austro-Hungarian expansion had been torn up.

Hoping a Turkish massacre of Christian rebels might induce the Western Powers to revise their decision, the Russians charged a Cossack officer to organise revolt in eastern Macedonia. In October 1878 this officer assembled the four hundred Macedonian volunteers who had fought for Bulgaria and the leaders of the Kumanovo-Kratovo rising, and sent them in bands from Bulgarian soil to seize the precipitous Kresna defile. They rallied some peasants by promise of liberation, occupied Bansko, massacred fifty Turkish soldiers, and resisted Turkish reinforcements desperately for a week, bringing into action a cannon made of a hollowed cherry tree which exploded at the first shot. Then their leader was killed and several thousands of refugees poured into Bulgaria while *bashi bazouks* looted and gutted their homes. But Europe was unmoved and the refugees soon returned under amnesty.

Two years later a rising planned by the Exarchist bishops of Okhrid and Skoplje was nipped in the bud (a Greek abbot betrayed their plot); whereupon Turkish control was tightened and the bishops deported with their fellow-conspirators.

Among those involved was Spiro, nicknamed Tserné (the Black), a typical *Haiduk*, who had won fame around Prilip by protecting the people from freebooting Moslem officials and bandits. One of the worst bandits was "Little" Suleiman, who with five companions held the villages in terror; yet he had friends among the Turkish authorities, so appeals for protection were both useless and dangerous. But a bold

priest urged the villagers to kill the rascal, whereupon Suleiman so tortured him that he died. The story reached Spiro's ears—he was a clerk by profession and tobacco-smuggler by trade but had lately thrashed a Turk and was in hiding from the consequences. He and several friends ambushed and slew Suleiman's band. Then they decided to become professional bandit-slayers. By day they hid in forests, fed by grateful villagers, their numbers being swelled by fugitives from Turkish injustices. Soon Spiro's fame spread across all Macedonia; but his complicity in the conspiracy of 1880 put a price on his head, a price earned by Exarchists who disliked him because his sympathies were Serbian.

But some of Spiro's adherents carried on, led by Dimé Tchakré. He solicited subscriptions from rich townsmen, among them the bankers Kraptchev and Kondov; but their money stood them well with the Turks, so they declined to pay, Kondov insulting Tchakré's mother who had called for his contribution. Thereupon, on Easter Sunday 1881, Tchakré and five men with arms concealed beneath heavy cloaks went to Kondov's house in Prilip, bent on avenging the insult; but while they waited there for Kondov, his relative Kraptchev warned the Turkish authorities. Kondov's house was surrounded. Tchakré sent the family away, then held the Turks at bay for two days. But the house was set afire and the defenders shot down while trying to escape. For forty nights the dead men's graves were lit by lamps put there secretly by a shepherd; but none other dared go to the graves by night, so the legend grew that God honoured their spirits by giving them light. In truth the flame of revolt they lit burnt on, for many young Macedonians were inspired to emulate them while dreaming of ultimate freedom.

In 1871 a mason's son, Damian Gruev, had been born at Smilevo and eventually went to study history at Sofia and Belgrade. He found Bulgaria and Serbia planning to annex or partition his country; and in Sofia he met many Macedonians in Bulgarian service who thought they could best liberate Macedonia by working first for autonomy with Bulgarian help, then uniting with Bulgaria as Eastern Roumelia had done. But Gruev disliked this plan and resolved to forestall it, knowing Bulgarian domination would never appeal to non-Slav Macedonians, nor to many Slavs themselves. In 1891 he returned to Smilevo to teach in an Exarchist school,

being sent afterwards to Salonika; but he visited Bitolje and Prilip, where his personality and eloquence won many to his way of thinking.

In November 1893 Gruev called a meeting at Salonika where a Central (executive) Committee of six was elected with Dr. Christo Tatartchev (from Rezen) as President and himself as Secretary. They resolved to work for the reforms promised by the Berlin Congress and ultimately for the autonomy of Macedonia, either under a European Governor-General (or Prince) and the Sultan's suzerainty (like Bulgaria) or within a Federation of free Balkan States; but they repudiated all ideas of union with either Bulgaria or Serbia. Supremists pretend this repudiation was merely to allay the Western Powers' suspicions: pinning their arguments to the preponderant role the Slavs (stirred by the Exarchate) played, while ignoring both the inter-Macedonian feud and the obvious fact that neither Greeks nor Vlachs nor Moslem Turks and Albanians wished merely to exchange one domination for another.

During 1894 the Committee began to build a Macedonian national organisation, its members nominating local organisers and arranging sub-Committees at Salonika, Seres, Skoplje and Bitolje. Around Bitolje Gruev found that Peré Tochev had already formed a strong organisation with like ideas; and here he was joined by Georché Petrov too. Petrov worked for an organisation called *Lozari* (Grape Gatherers), founded by the Exarchist Bishop Theodosi of Skoplje, a Macedonian who had planned to thwart Serbian and Bulgarian annexionist intentions by developing a Macedonian national culture, the Macedonian dialect in churches and schools, and a Macedonian Church independent alike of the Exarchate and Patriarchate (but the Exarchate soon transferred Theodosi to Sofia).

The dedication of a church at Rezen camouflaged a secret meeting which discussed problems of money and arms—for Christians were forbidden to carry arms; then, during August, a general congress of delegates from all districts was held at Salonika. All agreed they must rally educated men who could rouse the peasants (whose spirits were broken by centuries of Turkish rule), check drunkenness, gambling, theft and other vices and develop a Macedonian national feeling among them, and prepare them for revolt if that should be necessary. Caution was essential because the well-to-do, particularly town-dwelling Christian merchants and

tax-farmers, would oppose plans which might upset their affairs. Many Bulgarophile Exarchists opposed them, likewise the Hellenised Patriarchists. But among Exarchist school-teachers were many who shared their ideas and were prepared to take risks for them; secretly these taught their pupils to shoot, discouraged them from "owning up" when threatened or thrashed, flogged those who "told tales".

Late in 1894 Gruev went to teach at Shtip where he met another teacher, Gotzé Deltchev, whose organising ability admirably supplemented Gruev's idealism and soon set him at the head of Gruev's organisation.

Born at Kukush in 1872, Deltchev stabbed a schoolmate who had betrayed a practical joke against their school-teacher. In 1888 he went to the Exarchist High School in Salonika where he again distinguished himself by shouting, during the Sultan's birthday celebrations: "Down with the Sultan"—afterwards pleading that the words had slipped out by accident. Eventually he passed into the Bulgarian Military College; but he disliked Sofia's atmosphere, read books deemed subversive, and in 1894 was expelled as a dangerous socialist. He soon became Gruev's closest friend. In 1895 they were preaching and organising throughout Macedonia.

During the summer of 1896 Gruev, Deltchev, and fourteen delegates met secretly at Salonika to draw up statutes. They named their organisation the *Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation*—for it organised *internally*, within Macedonia, for an eventual popular rising. They chose a black flag bearing a crimson skull and crossbones—colours symbolising their blood upon a field of slavery—and the motto "Freedom or Death". Allegiance to IMRO should be sworn upon a Bible and revolver, and death be the penalty for disloyalty. All good Macedonians over nineteen years of age might join, regardless of sex, religion, rank or race provided they loved their land and desired liberty, but no propaganda in the Serbian, Greek, or Bulgarian interest would be tolerated. Disinterested help would be welcomed from free countries, but not their control of IMRO which stood for the freedom in equality of all Macedonia's heterogeneous peoples. Macedonia should be an independent link between her neighbours, not their prey; and there should be no inter-racial feuds, but close collaboration to win the autonomy Bulgaria already enjoyed. But until every man was armed the Turkish authorities must not be provoked, otherwise they would discover IMRO's

existence and suppress it, while premature revolt would mean only vain sacrifice.

Meantime Deltchev had been in touch with immigrants in Bulgaria, hoping they would send arms and money by secret ways. Early in 1894 a committee was formed in Sofia under the deputy Traiko Kitantchev, a Macedonian from Rezen, who got into touch with immigrant brotherhoods and military officers, organising groups to stir Bulgarian interest.

But among the immigrants were those who had helped to dethrone Prince Alexander, murdered Stambulov, and prospered in Bulgarian service; these men, with the ambitious Prince Ferdinand behind them, stood for the annexation of Macedonia by Bulgaria. So a general congress at Sofia in March 1895 agreed that Kitantchev's Committee should represent all Slav immigrants and call itself the *Supreme Committee (Vrhoven Komitet) for Macedonia and the Province of Adrianople*, having the autonomy of Macedonia and Adrianople province as its avowed aim. But as its name and headquarters imply, this Committee was intended to control and co-ordinate in the Bulgarian interest all activities in Macedonia and Eastern Thrace, dissimulating (by such slogans as "Macedonia for the Macedonians") its intention to ensure their ultimate union with Bulgaria. Members of this Committee and their chauvinist Bulgarian friends came to be called *Supremists*; but there were many liberal-minded immigrants and Bulgarians sharing the views of the democratic *Internal Organisation (IMRO)* whose adherents were called *Internalists* or (later) *Federalists*.

The development of a popular Macedonian movement opposing union with Bulgaria was the last thing Prince Ferdinand and his Supremist friends wanted; so they planned to control or destroy IMRO. Lieutenant Venedikov and other military friends of Deltchev had formed a secret Officers' Organisation to collect money and arms and prepare regulations for instructors in guerilla warfare; and they were encouraged by Generals Tsontchev and Nikolaev who (thinking to precipitate a crisis before IMRO was prepared) incited these enthusiastic youngsters to action.

Accordingly, eight hundred old *Haiduks* and adventurous or destitute immigrants were enrolled in bands, under forty officers who led them over the frontier early in 1895. There were some sharp engagements, but the peasants would not help—indeed the raiders learnt at great cost that guerilla

warfare cannot succeed unless waged by men who know the forest paths and have the people's support. However, Lieutenant Boris Sarafov of Nevrokop, with a band under a local voivode, won spurious fame by driving the Turkish authorities from Melnik and holding that Greek town in terror for three days. The Turkish Government warned Bulgaria sternly—though simultaneously agreeing, as a conciliatory gesture, that the Sultan's Firman whereby Ferdinand was acknowledged Prince of Bulgaria need no longer be renewed every three years. But the peasants of the raided districts suffered from the severe measures taken by the Turkish authorities; so many immigrants, among them Kitantchev, sympathised with Gruev who hurried to Sofia to protest against Bulgarian interference.

But Supremist senior officers would have no backsliding towards Gruev's ideas. Early in 1896 they ousted Kitantchev from presidency of the Supreme Committee, putting in his place General Nikolaev, who scoffed at the idea of an internal general rising by mere peasants, saying IMRO must obey his Committee which disposed of 30,000 Bulgarian reserve officers. Deltchev, coming to Sofia, protested to Nikolaev, who rudely answered that IMRO was powerless without arms and money from the Supremists who would supply them only upon condition that they should decide the moment for revolt.

Deltchev angrily went back to Macedonia; but before leaving Sofia he appointed Georché Petrov External (or Beyond the Frontier) Representative of IMRO—and as time went on IMRO had several such representatives, both in Bulgaria and other countries, who were upon terms of equality with members of IMRO Central Committee and answerable, like them, to the Revolutionary Congress of delegates from all Macedonian districts. Petrov worked to sway the immigrants towards IMRO ideas, and counteract Supremist propaganda in other countries where Supremist agents were at work long before the secret IMRO was heard of. He would have no dealings with Prince Ferdinand.

Petrov's activities split the Supreme Committee and Nikolaev was forced to resign. Nikolaev's successor, Christo Stanichev, failed to heal the breach, though the Government was at this moment soft-pedalling the Supremists; so in May 1899 Boris Sarafov was elected President. Sarafov headed those younger officers who opposed their military superiors' policy, considering that IMRO should

control its own affairs. But Sarafov's ambition soon out-matched his discretion. He was violent, tiresome, unscrupulous, with a genius for publicity, a picturesque figure who became legendary, a London paper even writing that he had bought a car in which he often dashed across the (mountainous) frontier—in days when motoring, even in England, was still something of an adventure!

Meanwhile, since the inefficient Turks were masters only of Macedonia's towns and roads (and by night not always of these), IMRO had grown into a popular peasant movement, a secret State within a State, whole villages sometimes taking the oath together. Adherents were organised in groups of ten who generally knew only members of their own group; but the group *voivodi* together formed the local committees. These local committees were answerable to district committees controlled (on behalf of the annual Revolutionary Congress, the supreme authority) by the political executive Central Committee which had its headquarters "everywhere and nowhere" upon revolutionary territory. All officers and members of committees were elected, though the Central Committee might nominate subordinates when elections were difficult. Independent bands of *Haiduks* submitted to IMRO'S control, becoming its police force and protecting arms convoys, punishing malefactors and executing spies condemned by secret revolutionary tribunals; these tribunals ultimately administered everywhere a rude justice Christians seldom received from Turkish courts (which eventually found themselves boycotted). Soon there were regular couriers, guides, a revolutionary postal service, and half a dozen hectographed news sheets in circulation.

But money was needed. At the start enough was subscribed, or (more often) stolen from rich Turks. Post offices were robbed, enthusiastic schoolboys became expert thieves, well-to-do merchants were held to ransom; but these methods soon proved inadequate and dangerous, so regular taxes were levied and often collected by force or threat. Such methods angered Grecophile Patriarchists and Bulgarophile Exarchists who became informers or spies for the Turks. In self-defence IMRO had to act severely against spies or give up collecting money for arms, otherwise it would have been betrayed to the Turks; and since it had no gaols there were but two punishments, capital or corporal. There were many injustices; yet men were seldom killed for disagreeing with IMRO'S aims provided they paid up and held their tongues.

But even when there was money it was hard to get arms enough. Bulgaria was the nearest source of supply and friendly immigrants smuggled old Bulgarian Army weapons across the border; so eastern Macedonia was first and best equipped. Other supplies trickled from north and south, and in 1897 the revolutionaries opened their first bomb factory—in the Bulgarian mountains near the border.

Late in 1896 the Turkish authorities' suspicions were first aroused by the chance discovery near Bitolje of bombs and dynamite in sacks of rice carried by a pony convoy. Suspects were arrested, but even torture failed to wring from them any revolutionary secrets. Next, a sack of revolutionary news sheets was seized; then in August 1897 the execution of three Turks by revolutionaries led to a search by troops who found an ammunition store in a priest's house.

But the Turks did not realise their danger until November, when Supremists sent from Bulgaria twenty-six *Haiduks*, dressed as Turkish soldiers, who murdered a rich Turk in his house at Vinitza and a forest guard who belonged to IMRO. The forester's wife, thinking revolutionaries had executed him, denounced the other nine members of his revolutionary group. The Turks found fifty rifles and some bombs, so martial law was proclaimed in the district and ruthless measures taken. It is said 218 revolutionaries were killed, 483 arrested (among them thirty teachers), many mouths being opened by red-hot irons or boiling water: culprits' houses were burnt and arms stores discovered. Deltchev was asked why he travelled so much; to which he answered that he sought a girl friend called Dynamite—the word being written in a note he was carrying. He was told to report at intervals to the authorities. The raiding *Haiduks* were arrested in Bulgaria while the Bulgarian Government curried Macedonian favour by protesting against Turkish severity; but they were soon released and hailed as heroes, so bandits felt encouraged to masquerade as Macedonian revolutionaries.

IMRO, now exposed, had to take up arms in self-defence long before it was ready. Its bands in the mountains multiplied, their ranks swelled by fugitives from Turkish retaliatory persecution. Deltchev, applying his military training to great purpose, organised and trained them by districts under their voivodi and they soon proved more than a match upon their own ground for ill-trained Turkish troops. Under iron discipline, they set an example of heroism and

endurance which encouraged the people, alarmed the Turks, terrified traitors. Moreover young villagers, peasants going about their peaceful affairs day by day, were taught to use arms and organised in "Companies of Death", militia forces storing their arms in local depots but ready for action if there should be trouble in their neighbourhoods.

While the Supreme Committee in Sofia was headed by Sarafov (who once declared the Macedonians were neither Bulgars nor Serbs and would be controlled by neither) it collaborated energetically with IMRO, all immigrants being compulsorily taxed (as IMRO taxed in Macedonia) and forced to subscribe a loan of 300,000 gold francs. Sarafov acquired 13,000 rifles, revolvers and ammunition: Bulgarian officers taught immigrant youths and adventurous Bulgarians to use them in guerilla warfare. Bands distributed these arms free in eastern Macedonia, and money too, while taking nothing from the peasants; thus the Supreme Committee won prestige and control in several frontier districts. Perhaps Sarafov did not intend this treachery to IMRO, but Prince Ferdinand's Supremist Army Chiefs played upon his wild ambition to lead the Macedonian revolutionary movement.

Late in 1900 Sarafov over-reached himself by extending his terrorist methods to Roumania. He caused a Macedonian immigrant and a (Macedonian) Vlach newspaper editor to be assassinated in Bucharest; and his agents robbed a rich Roumanian's house, smuggling the stolen money to Bulgaria in a coffin holding the remains of the Bulgarian hero Rakovski which Sarafov had induced the Bulgarian authorities to claim at this convenient moment. For these outrages the Roumanians condemned Sarafov to death *in contumaciam* and threatened Bulgaria; while clues their investigations revealed enabled the Turkish authorities at Salonika to arrest, in January (1901), twenty-seven revolutionaries, among them Dr. Tatartchev, Christo Matov, Peré Tochev and Ivan Nikolov of IMRO'S Central Committee, who were banished to Asia Minor, papers found in their possession leading to more arrests and the execution of twenty men at Skoplje.

When this crisis began General Tsontchev, unofficial member of the Supreme Committee, formally resigned from the Bulgarian Army (with Colonels Yankov and Nikolov), thundering that he would oust Sarafov (whom he accused of corruption), seize control of IMRO, and cause a rising in

Macedonia within six months—for it would be absurd for a General to head a revolutionary organisation which did not revolt. Thereupon Sarafov declared Tsontchev and his friends were expelled from the Supremist organisation; but ten days later (in March 1901) Sarafov was arrested in Sofia with several members of his Committee, ostensibly to placate Roumania (though they were released again a few months later).

But several influential Supremists argued that it would be indiscreet to let the Supreme Committee (which posed before Europe as a Macedonian organisation) be headed by a Bulgarian General; moreover, Tsontchev, being a downright supporter of Prince Ferdinand, would never win support among the Macedonians who knew Ferdinand cared everything for his dynastic interests and nothing for the Macedonians' liberties. So there was a three-cornered dispute. Ultimately the Bulgarian writer Stoyan Mihailovski became President. Mihailovski, violent critic of Prince Ferdinand and firm believer in cultural preparation for ultimate Balkan Federation, condemned Sarafov's methods while pledging the Supreme Committee to confine itself henceforward to a subsidiary role. This was a triumph for Deltchev, who had hurried to Sofia to oppose Tsontchev.

Tsontchev and his friends were furious. In Ferdinand's name they called for the immigrants' support, and at the immigrants' congress in July (1901) Tsontchev was elected vice-President of the Supreme Committee. Though Mihailovski remained President his idealism was no match for Tsontchev's military ruthlessness and soon Tsontchev became the real master, disregarding Mihailovski's pledge. Early in 1902 numerous immigrants rallied to an opposition committee under Christo Stanichev who was actively supported by many democratic Bulgarian idealists, among them the poet and newspaper editor Yavorov of Chirpan. The two groups waged a violent war of words, calling each other respectively vagabonds and palace lackeys while their main purpose—the struggle against Turkey—was practically forgotten; and soon their hot words led to blows, for Tsontchev had already sent bands to seize control in Macedonia.

Skirmishes had begun between the Turks and comitadjis of IMRO who soon covered themselves with glory by their heroic deeds. At first comitadjis in twos and threes only were involved because IMRO tried to avoid engagements which provoked reprisals upon defenceless villagers, whole-

sale arrests, torture, the burning of homes and ransacking of villages by *bashi bazouks*; but such reprisals pleased Sofia's Supremists because despair drove the people towards reliance upon Bulgarian help, hundreds flying to Bulgaria where they fell under Supremist influence.

In March 1900 Deltchev had toured Eastern Thrace (Adrianople province), hoping to arrange collaboration with discontented elements there, but his reception was cold for the Supremists were all-powerful. Travelling as a pig-dealer he stayed one night with a friendly mayor; but the authorities, hearing a revolutionary was about, sent gendarmerie whose commandant billeted himself at the same house. The mayor pretended to welcome him, setting supper before a blazing fire. Deltchev came in. Coolly he greeted the commandant, seated himself and asked his business.

"We are looking for a Macedonian revolutionary leader," explained the commandant.

"Well, I hope you catch him," replied Deltchev. "We poor merchants can do no business while these wretched revolutionaries are about, stirring up discontent."

Back in Macedonia Deltchev, Yani Sandanski, and others organised against Supremist penetration; while Gruev arranged for co-operation with Macedonian immigrants in the Serbian Army, headed by Lieutenant Gerdjikovitch, who had organised a military revolutionary group but disapproved of Serbian chauvinist aims. Deltchev was so ubiquitous yet elusive that the Turks named him the "Flying Devil" and put a price of £T1,000 upon his head; with a strong band behind him he played hide-and-seek with their patrols, travelling hither and thither through summer and winter, instructing and encouraging and everywhere winning the peasants' admiration. He was welcomed alike by Slavs, Albanians, Vlachs, and by many Turkish peasants who liked the idea of an autonomous Macedonia under the Sultan's suzerainty.

Then came the tragedy of Gruev's arrest at Bitolje. Not long afterwards a smart stranger called to see him in gaol—it was Deltchev; and later came a beggar—Deltchev again. Gruev wrote to his colleagues in invisible ink between the lines of commonplace letters; but eventually he was interned in Asia Minor. Deltchev became the dominant figure of IMRO—though he did not join the Central Committee, being military leader of the whole organisation and not

political representative of any particular district. Early in 1902 Deltchev presided over a conference at Plovdiv of revolutionaries from Eastern Thrace, arranging for collaboration and agreeing that any of them, and any Bulgarians who accepted IMRO's aims, might join the Macedonian Organisation.

Late in 1901 General Tsontchev's bands had appeared in Macedonia, some led by altruistic officers who eventually joined and became leaders of IMRO; but others had to be repelled by force. The first band, twelve men under a former Bulgarian N.C.O., was disarmed by villagers and sent back; but soon came others and fratricidal guerilla warfare began, waged with ruthless cruelty by both sides while the Turks looked on. The Supremists murdered village headmen who would not declare for union with Bulgaria; they even sent one of Stambulov's murderers (Haliu) to kill Deltchev; they enrolled bandits and traitors in flight from IMRO's discipline, paying them well; and since they raised money enough in Bulgaria, they collected none in Macedonia and gave rifles away—whereas every man joining IMRO had to buy a rifle, some starving themselves or stealing or selling their oxen to raise the money. (Even Macedonians who married, or went abroad for education instead of joining IMRO, were persecuted.) Moreover the Supremists told the peasants that once they revolted the Bulgarians and Russians would march to their aid within a week. So Tsontchev's bands gained a firm footing in eastern Macedonia; though Razlog, Melnik, Strumitza and Demir Hissar were held for IMRO by Yani Sandanski of Melnik and Tcherno Peev of Strumitza, who prevented the invaders from crossing the Vardar.

But Sandanski and Peev needed money. They planned to hold to ransom a rich Turk but he fell ill just when they wanted him; whereupon they decided that an American Protestant missionary, Dr. House, should serve their purpose, so his flock asked him to Bansko. But just then another missionary, Miss Helen Stone of Boston, happened to arrive and, it is sometimes said, suggested to Sandanski that she would serve even better. Anyway, an ambush was laid for her between Bansko and Gorna Djoumaia by comitadjis disguised as Turks. Miss Stone came by in a cart with her friend Madame Tsilka. They were surrounded. The women screamed. A Turk coming up the road fired, but was shot down. The women were carried into the mountains. Then Sandanski told them his intentions—but he found there was

a complication, for Madame Tsilka was expecting a child.

The affair gave the foreign Press a sensation and American diplomats much trouble. The Supremists, thinking to win good repute, sent strong bands against the kidnappers who fought several severe engagements with them. But always the captives were treated with every consideration circumstances would allow, though Madame Tsilka made her will in case her child's birth should kill her. Then, one stormy night in December 1901, in a wine-cellar in the Pirin Mountains, a healthy girl was born. The delighted comitadjis, often children themselves at heart, drank the child's health; but Turkish troops soon chased them from this refuge, Madame Tsilka riding while a comitadji carried her baby.

Sandanski demanded £T25,000; but the Turks were pursuing him, maltreating his supporters, so his agent agreed to accept the half. Dr. House took the money to Bansko, escorted by Turkish soldiers; but he learnt that the Turks planned to attack the comitadjis directly they brought the women; so he honourably warned Sandanski, then hid the gold with Sandanski's friends, filling its boxes with scrap-iron. Then the women were released in Strumitza; so the Turks carried those heavy boxes back to Seres and were furious when House told them there what he had done. Miss Stone became IMRO's champion in America.

When Sarafov was released in Sofia he went abroad to raise money for IMRO, though the revolutionaries did not trust this adventurous simpleton. He had heard that a monastery upon Mount Athos was filled with treasure from Arabia but could devise no means of getting it. He thought to kidnap the Serbian King Alexander, but that proved too difficult. He offered Macedonian volunteers to America during the Spanish-American War, provided the Americans would supply arms and money for IMRO. In 1902 a friend of the exiled Karageorgevitches at Geneva promised him Serbia would support IMRO; whereupon Sarafov hurried hopefully to Belgrade, only to find that his exiled Serbian friend was as powerless as the future King Petar. But he did (writes Silianov) persuade a rich Englishman to give him 56,000 francs!

The author, Christo Silianov, once Gruev's pupil, spent some months with a band led by the celebrated Marko, a Bulgarian ex-sergeant from Kotel. Thirst for adventure drew Marko to Macedonia where he soon headed a powerful band around Florina, administering IMRO justice, teach-

ing villagers to use arms and his own band to endure extreme hardship. Guided by local couriers, the comitadjis warned village committees of their presence by a strange cry, a tapping upon a wall, a password, or (as at Gornitchevo) by stopping the village water supply. Then any villager judged guilty of treachery, corruption, or evasion of IMRO taxes was punished. Generally his throat was cut, for shots might betray the comitadjis. Silianov discredited himself by declining to cut the throat of a teacher who, on his way to execution, begged to walk slowly so that his life might be prolonged a little. But in April 1902 Turkish soldiers surrounded Marko's house while he was visiting his family, whom he had brought to his district. With one other comitadji he defended the house for three days: then killed his wife, daughter, mother, aunt, friend, and himself, rather than be taken alive.

The Macedonian Cause appealed to the Bulgarian poet Yavorov's generous soul, so he joined a Federalist band upon an expedition.

It was early one February morning in 1902—a bitter morning, the ground white with snow. At Kustendil, in a cellar lighted by a flickering lamp, Yavorov took stock of his twelve companions as they donned their comitadjis' uniforms. One was a newsvendor, another unemployed—all ready to face dangers for a common ideal. Creeping through the scrub past a Turkish frontier post they came to a house where they ate and slept; but next dawn, alarmed by an approaching cavalry patrol, they bolted into a ravine and prepared to resist. Yavorov, nervous at this first encounter, asked a companion to return his borrowed watch if he should be killed. However the Turks stayed only for food.

They were now in Kotchani district which swarmed with Supremist spies. Lately nine Federalists had been drugged with opium, then betrayed by their host to the Turks who slew them as they slept. Yavorov's band was betrayed too, attacked and dispersed, and several of his companions killed by Supremists; but Yavorov found refuge in a house.

As he talked that night by the fire with his old host the dogs without began to bark. The old man went out, then came again to say two comitadjis wished to speak with Yavorov; but Yavorov declined to go out, so the visitors came in and seized him. They were deserters from IMRO and said their orders were to take him dead or alive to their commander, Lieutenant Sofroni Stoyanov of the Bulgarian

Army. Yavorov thought his end had come. Supremists had killed the local Federalist leader, whereupon his friends had caught several Supremists and chopped off their heads upon his grave—so Yavorov expected to pay for that and was surprised to reach Stoyanov alive. He was more surprised to be kindly received by Stoyanov who deplored this fratricide, observing that history would show which side was right. Yavorov said it was odd that while he, from central Bulgaria, supported the Federalists, Stoyanov, from central Macedonia, served the Bulgarian Supremists.

A peasant brought food and Stoyanov paid for it. Stoyanov's men feared poison, but Yavorov fell to the food and jeered at their fears: whereat they angrily threatened him; but Stoyanov restrained their violence, though he accused Yavorov of inciting the peasants against the Supremists and urging them to put opium in their food. Stoyanov's men were disputing as to which of them should have Yavorov's revolver when they had killed him: so Yavorov asked that he might kill himself; but Stoyanov said he would not be killed but must go with his captors so that the people would think he had joined the Supremists—Stoyanov's hosts had begged that Yavorov be spared or the Federalists might avenge his death upon them. But at this moment a shepherd lad came breathlessly to say soldiers were approaching. Stoyanov sprang up, then held out his hand to Yavorov, asking him to forget the hard words they had exchanged but to remember the good. Then the Supremists were gone and Yavorov, to his surprise, found himself free again. Stoyanov soon afterwards met Deltchev and joined IMRO.

Yavorov wandered dangerously upon IMRO's business. One day, as he lay in a house reading *Faust*, the Turkish village policeman called his hostess. Yavorov hid behind the door. The Turk came in for bread but did not notice Yavorov. Another day, as Yavorov was resting with two companions, a Turk blundered into the house and was terrified to find himself at the mercy of three comitadjis; but Yavorov said they would spare him if he swore upon a Bible not to betray them—knowing no Turk ever broke an oath upon a Bible. But being an atheist Yavorov had no Bible, so his *Faust* served instead, the Turk being none the wiser!

While there was only one engagement in Macedonia between Turks and comitadjis in 1898, there were eight in 1901, thirty-four in 1902 and eighty-six (according to Sofia)

during the first seven months of 1903—most of them in the Salonika and Bitolje vilayets. One cannot tell in how many of them Federalists fought; but the Federalists tried to avoid conflict and did not unnecessarily enter villages because the Turks would punish the villagers for harbouring them; whereas the Supremists went noisily to villages and deliberately provoked conflicts, then retired to Bulgaria, leaving Federalist bands and country-folk to suffer reprisals. Of thrilling episodes there were many. Early in 1902 Deltchev and twenty men were betrayed and surrounded in a village, but the oil in the Turks' rifles was congealed by the cold so the comitadjis escaped. Another band defended themselves in a house for two days until their ammunition was exhausted; then the survivors lined up and shot themselves.

Encouraged by the Russo-Bulgarian alliance in 1902, the Supremists redoubled their activities, working first to crush Federalist opposition to revolt. During May Midshipman Saev twice attacked Peev's great band; while Sandanski was repeatedly attacked near the border by bands under Bulgarian officers. During July Colonel Yankov led a large band to prepare western Macedonia for immediate revolt, promising Bulgarian and Russian aid if the people engaged the Turks for a week. But IMRO committees warned him to mind his own business. Yankov ignored them; whereupon his vanguard was surrounded near the Vardar by Federalist militia and sent back to him disarmed. Nevertheless Yankov pushed on to Kastoria with a hundred and twenty men; but there they were surrounded, disarmed and sent back to Bulgaria; though Yankov himself, narrowly escaping execution, fled into Greece. The Greeks, surprised to see this voivode in Bulgarian military uniform, sent him to Athens, where it is said he arranged co-operation with the Greek annexionists.

But Tsontchev and his friends were determined to have a "revolt", though they could persuade only two villages outside the Gorna Djoumaia district to support them. On October 6, 1902, Saev sent men to attack some Turks in Jeleznitza village and so embroil the local people that they would be obliged to defend themselves. The Turks, as was hoped, put the village to flames; whereupon Saev's band came up and fought the Turks all day, while Peev's men watched this affray between their enemies from a distance.

Simultaneously 350 Bulgarians under Captain Yordan Stoyanov attacked 2,500 Turks at another village, losing

forty-three killed but slaying 108 Turks. General Tsontchev and Captain Protogerov led other bands and were both wounded. In all, nineteen engagements were fought near the border in ten days, 2,580 men from Bulgaria under officers in uniform being opposed by 13,960 Turks and losing ninety-five killed. Federalist bands took no part: though militia under Supremist influence in some places supported the raiders. Hundreds of refugees followed them back to Bulgaria, while certain foreign correspondents luridly exaggerated the raping of women and burning of sixty-seven houses by the Turks. The Supremist Press made much of this "revolt" and derided Deltchev for holding IMRO back; whereas Stanichev's immigrants and Ferdinand's Radical and Democrat opponents roundly condemned such wanton provocation.

The Turkish Government now decided to forestall Supremist aims and European interference, appointing Hilmi Pasha Inspector-General of Macedonia in December with orders to inaugurate reforms. The Berlin Treaty had promised reforms, so Austria-Hungary and Russia (on behalf of the other signatories) drew up the "February Programme" (so called because prepared in February 1903). Turkey accepted it. Provision was made for Christian gendarmes and "land guards", foreign instructors for the gendarmerie, reform of law courts and tax collecting, suppression of brigandage, and an amnesty for political offenders.

So four foreign gendarmerie instructors were engaged, while Hilmi set to work to disarm the population and dissolve IMRO as a prelude to the reforms. But though able and well-intentioned, Hilmi was too eager for impressive paper results: while blundering or brutal officials let themselves be provoked to reprisal by the Supremists, who did not want reforms but revolt. In consequence the situation drifted from bad to worse, while the ruthlessness of Turkish troops hunting for arms and the treachery of Grecophile Patriarchist Slavs who spied for them compelled the despairing people and leaders of IMRO to listen to advice and promises of liberation from Sofia.

When IMRO's Central Committee were arrested in 1901 their functions were automatically assumed by a Reserve Committee; but when the Revolutionary Congress had elected these Committees Deltchev had not been prominent, so he belonged to neither, nor had it been possible to hold any Congress since. The President of the Reserve Commit-

tee now directing IMRO's policy was Ivan Garvanov, a Bulgarian from Stara Zagora who had been an Exarchist teacher in Macedonia. In 1895 he had headed a faction of belligerent Exarchists who even planned to murder Gruev, Tochev and other IMRO leaders; ultimately, however, he had apparently changed his views and become a zealous member of IMRO. But on January 2, 1903, he and his four colleagues of the Committee met secretly at Salonika with representatives of the Thracian revolutionaries and of the twelve Macedonian districts. Neither Deltchev nor any of the military leaders was there: Gruev was in Asia Minor: while the regular Central Committee, though lately amnestied, were banished from Macedonia and stayed in Sofia.

At this Conference some of the delegates opined that if revolt was delayed all their arms would be discovered: others that there would be a mass emigration: and all, that IMRO would be split or destroyed unless agreement with the Supremists was reached because the people, encouraged by Supremist propaganda and driven to desperation by Turkish reprisals, were eager to rise, believing in Bulgarian support and knowing nothing of the dangers. They might succeed. Europe might intervene. And better glorious defeat than disintegration. So it was decided that Macedonia should rise in May.

Then Garvanov and Velko Doumev (representing respectively Macedonia and Thrace) went to Sofia to meet the exiled leaders and immigrants' representatives. Deltchev, Georché Petrov, Peré Tochev and Sarafov were there too. Hearing of the Salonika decision Deltchev had rushed to Sofia and was deeply distressed to find that Matov and Tatartchev, now comfortable in Sofia, had accepted the Supremist view. He urged hotly that IMRO was not prepared; but at length, finding himself outvoted and wishing to prevent another split, he reluctantly agreed that there should be a rising if district congresses agreed. So the Supremists were told their collaboration would be welcomed provided IMRO decided when the revolt should begin, though they were warned that IMRO would oppose any aims other than Macedonian autonomy.

Sandanski and Peev were highly indignant at this agreement. To the last they had resisted Supremist raiders. In December Protogerov had led 150 men against Peev in Strumitza district; but Peev called out the militia and fought all night till Supremist buglers sounded the retreat and

Protogerov's force withdrew across the border. But this action had brought into the district strong Turkish forces which twice cornered Federalist bands. These little battles led to martial law in the district; villages were burnt, hundreds of peasants arrested.

Early in January 1903 Yavorov had gone again to Macedonia, this time with Deltchev, thirty well-armed men, and six ponies carrying explosives. Deltchev wore grey homespun coat and breeches: brown wool gaiters and cross-strapped puttees: a heavy cloak on his shoulder: a white Albanian cap with a black scarf round it: a knife, revolver and cartridge-belt at his waist. As they made their stealthy way over the border by precipitous paths through the mountains, through dark forests and over frozen torrents, the snow sang under their feet and the cold bit their faces. Deltchev was oppressed by premonition of disaster; and as they left Bulgarian soil he turned, stood in silence a moment, tears in his eyes, then quietly said: "Farewell, Bulgaria! I shall not see you again." The rugged peaks of Pirin were wrapped in cloud—"Macedonia received us in a veil of mourning," wrote Yavorov.

Their gloom was deepened when they met two limping refugees who had been so beaten by the Turks that they had fled to the mountains through the snow, leaving homes and families. Deltchev was deeply moved—he worked for the people who loved him, and their sufferings were his own. Unlike immigrants in safe Bulgaria, he dared not contemplate the awful consequences of an unsuccessful revolt. If the Balkan States would together support a revolt by attacking Turkey all would be well perhaps—but he knew they were not prepared for war. The Supremists wanted Macedonian soil; but Deltchev wanted freedom for the people. Yet he was merciful to Supremists and discouraged executions, often telling traitors the tale of Judas, then pardoning them—and so impressing many that they repented their disloyalty. He disliked publicity: and told journalists to judge him by his acts, not his words.

They went down to Bansko, a quaint town of massive stone houses and high arched doorways where the people were Federalists; then on to Nevrokop over a terrible track. One man broke his leg in a ravine, another disappeared over a precipice, a third was frost-bitten. Then one of the ponies, laden with dynamite, bolted for a Supremist village but was happily caught before he betrayed the band's pass-

ing. As they went they poked fun at each other, and jibed at Prince Ferdinand who was the butt of much Federalist humour. In desperate Nevrokop Deltchev was distressed to find everyone wanted revolt, though nobody was equipped for it. Then came word of the Salonika decision and he went to Sofia.

After the agreement reached at Sofia between Federalists and Supremists, officers and guerilla leaders hurried during February with bands from Bulgaria to organise in Macedonia for the revolt, fighting many heroic engagements with Turkish troops as they went. Sarafov and Garvanov, escorted by a Federalist band on their way to Bitolje, were betrayed and fiercely attacked, losing eight killed. Saev, with 120 men, was surprised while resting and fell leading his band. And so on.

Deltchev had rejoined Yavorov at a village near Nevrokop where Sandanski and others had come to confer with him, someone bringing a favourite dog which alarmed them all by barking wildly at every Turk who passed their house. Deltchev wept. IMRO was falling under Supremist influence. It would be a national-peasant movement no longer, but an organisation in Bulgarian service. At Sofia he had agreed upon the destruction of railways and public buildings to shake the Empire and attract European attention, provided such outrages were committed far from Macedonian towns and villages so that the people should not be called to account; and Sandanski hesitantly agreed that they should try this plan while striving to prevent district congresses from agreeing to revolt. So they went with their bands to train upon the snowy flanks of Mount Ali Batouch. In a mountain cave Yavorov produced the first (hctographed) number of the famous revolutionary paper *Freedom or Death*, on February 10, 1903.

On Good Friday a peasant carrying a basket approached Salonika's gates.

"Where are you going and what have you in that basket?" challenged a policeman.

"Only a few coloured eggs for Easter. They're pretty eggs. Look! Take one or two if you like."

The policeman helped himself and let the peasant pass. The peasant was the "Flying Devil", with a price on his head and two loaded revolvers at his breast.

Gruev had been amnestied and had hurried to Salonika. Deltchev persuaded him and Garvanov to postpone the revolt,

though Gruev held that unless it took place immediately after the harvest Hilmi Pasha's ruthless measures would destroy IMRO. Deltchev slipped out of Salonika again, rejoined his band, blew up a large railway bridge between Drama and Seres, then made arrangements for a congress of delegates from all eastern Macedonia in the Pirin Mountains. He met Yavorov, who was wandering with a donkey to carry his printing apparatus and bombs to defend it. He gave Yavorov his documents, telling him to keep them because he would soon be killed (for he opposed Supremist plans). The two friends then parted again.

Deltchev had barely left Salonika when pandemonium broke loose there. Back in 1896 some schoolboys in Plovdiv had formed a Macedonian terrorist group. For money they stole their parents' jewellery: then some of them, studying at Geneva, published a newspaper. One committed suicide because he could raise no more money in Bulgaria, but others stole £300 from a post office with a forged cheque. Then three of them in Salonika kidnapped two fellow-conspirators who persuaded their parents to ransom them!

Next they planned outrages to stir Europe. As they could hit upon no plan for murdering the Sultan they resolved to blow up the Ottoman Banks in Constantinople and Salonika. They told Sarafov and other immigrants in Sofia, who approved—for foreign capital would be involved and Europe would notice the Macedonian Question. Sarafov promised dynamite. So they rented a house opposite the Bank in Constantinople and opened a printing office; and near the Bank at Salonika they rented a hairdresser's shop. Then they tunnelled towards both banks. At Constantinople work was hard, through rock, and they could only cut about a foot a day. They dared not work by night because the bank's guards would hear. Food was smuggled in for the workers, and air pumped down to them. The debris was sent away in packets of waste paper. It took six months to finish the job. In Salonika it was easier—the earth was soft and the work done in two months. But the police intercepted Sarafov's dynamite and caught one of the Constantinople gang who had upon him compromising letters from Christo Matov of IMRO's Central Committee. The Constantinople gang were arrested and their tunnel discovered.

Sarafov's successor, Mihailovski, would send the Salonika gang no money; but "Orceto" (Yordan PopYordanov from Veles) hurried to Geneva where Sarafov gave him £500

from Russian Nihilists, then sent dynamite labelled "medicine" to Dedeagatch. But their hairdresser's shop had changed owners, so they had to rent another shop and dig a fresh tunnel to connect with the first. One of them went to undermine the Austrian post office at Adrianople but this plan failed. Then Garvanov, who did not want the Turks prematurely alarmed, seized Sarafov's dynamite in the Customs at Dedeagatch by a trick. The indignant plotters eventually raised from Deltchev £T250 of Miss Stone's ransom, upon condition that they would wait until IMRO gave the word. They smuggled more dynamite in sacks of rice from Sofia and made everything ready for instantaneous explosion if they were discovered; moreover Orceto and two others resolved to sacrifice themselves to heighten the effect, Orceto insuring his life for £500 in favour of Simeon Radev, who was asked to refund that amount to Sarafov. But they might have waited if the municipality had not begun canalisation near their tunnel. Early in April Orceto warned Garvanov that all revolutionaries should leave Salonika or hide because he and his friends dared wait no longer. Gruev protested in vain.

On April 28, 1903, a violent explosion set the French steamer *Guadalquiver* ablaze as she sailed from Salonika harbour. It was thought her boiler had burst. But simultaneously a bomb had exploded (harmlessly) beneath a train entering Salonika. Suspicions were aroused. All the passengers, safely put ashore, were called to the shipping agency: and all came except young Pavel Shatev—who was arrested at Skoplje. He had embarked with a time-bomb in his bag.

The next evening all Salonika's lights went out. Ten minutes later a terrific explosion shook the town, then bombs went off in all directions. Troops were called out. All was confusion. The rumour spread that revolutionaries were attacking.

Eight heroic fanatics had been at appointed places when one of them blew up the gas main under a railway bridge—their signal. Orceto dived into the tunnel, lit the fuse, then dashed to the director's apartments in the bank and told him to get out at once with his family. They escaped just in time. Orceto ran to his lodgings as the bank roared skyward behind him.

Another conspirator sat in Salonika's principal café. When the lights went out he struck a match and lit the fuse of a bomb. Seeing it, people ran in panic from the café

which was wrecked as the conspirator slipped away. Number four threw a bomb into another large café. Number one, having breached the gas main, strolled to the Grand Hotel and set down a bomb which wrecked its front. Number five bombed another hotel, setting it afire: then, being stopped by soldiers, he threw another bomb and was shot down. Six and seven went to demolish the town gasometer, but were chased back to their lodgings where they held their pursuers at bay all night by throwing bombs from the windows, then stood up and let themselves be shot. Orceto did the same: but the officer leading the troops who shot him told his men to respect this hero's body. Number one hid until May 1, then dressed neatly and walked to the telegraph office, intending to blow it up; but alert police stopped him and shot him before he could throw a bomb. Number eight had gone to kill the Governor; but as he loitered near the Residence he aroused suspicion, was chased and cornered, sat down upon a bomb and was blown to atoms.

The exasperated Turks hounded out the Slavs of Salonika and interned them, killing perhaps sixty; but though the conspirators' friends, who had hoped for a massacre, exaggerated irresponsible Turks' reprisals, these might have been worse had not foreign warships arrived on May 1 to protect foreign interests. However, there was a systematic inquisition lasting a month. The gaols were filled with suspects in chains and three hundred and fifty-three were interned at Rhodes, among them Garvanov and others of IMRO Central Committee. The four surviving conspirators were interned for life at Fezzan, where two died just before all were amnestied; so Shatev and "number four" crept to their comrades' graves by night, unearthed the decomposing bodies, cut off their heads, and carried them to their parents in Macedonia.

The indignant Turks reacted throughout Macedonia with ruthless ferocity, being helped by the Greeks who held anti-Bulgarian demonstrations in Athens. Christians were forbidden to leave their districts, a great hardship to some 10,000 labourers and artisans who went annually to seek work in the cities; so many joined IMRO. Engagements between revolutionaries and troops became numerous, village militia frequently helping both Federalist and Supremist bands. One of the fiercest battles was fought on April 27 near Gorna Djoumaia, bands under Protogerov, Sofroni Stoyanov and other officers being involved and losing fifty

killed, including three Bulgarian subalterns, though the Turkish casualties were heavier. Then there were massacres and burnings. Baldevo village near Nevrokop was burnt and fifty-eight men, women and children slaughtered. After a skirmish near Smardash the Turks burnt two hundred and forty houses in the town and slew eighty-five people. And so on. Everywhere troops tortured to make people tell where arms were hidden. Some even bought or begged arms from Turkish soldiers, then surrendered them as a sign of submission. Those found hiding arms were killed by the Turks, those surrendering them were afterwards thrashed, perhaps killed, by their own voivodi. So the people were desperate. There must be revolt or submission.

On May 3 couriers brought Yavorov two letters. The first, in code, was from Deltchev at Banitza village near Seres telling him the district congress would be at Lovtcha, near Nevrokop, on May 19. The other was from an IMRO representative who said Banitza had been burnt by Turkish troops.

Yavorov's anxiety may be imagined. Deltchev had written from Banitza. Had he escaped? Yavorov set off for Lovtcha with Yanko Vapzarov and his band. They heard firing in the distance. In a hollow they lay to sleep.

A cry woke Yavorov. The Turks were upon them—twenty paces away. Under a hail of bullets they bolted to a stone house and barricaded themselves behind a wall. The Turks swarmed after them; but in vain they tried to reach the house and at last withdrew, leaving a dozen men in the dust.

The Turks besieged them. In the dawn another band tried to relieve them but was repulsed. Then the Turks collected the villagers (men, women and children) and advanced behind them. But the comitadjis fired a volley into the air. The villagers fled, the Turks with them.

Next came the mayor, begging them to surrender—if they did not the Turks would burn his village. A comitadji shot him.

Then night fell. Silently the comitadjis gripped their rifles: then dashed—all together. By a miracle they escaped to a forest. Then they learnt that Deltchev was dead.

Dimo Hadji Dimov told Yavorov how Deltchev died. On May 2 Deltchev had met Dimov and other voivodi at Banitza. They decided to rest there a day with their bands, for Deltchev had despatches to write. Next morning Deltchev was worried—he had dreamt he had been shot through

the heart. He feared his surviving brother was killed.

The next dawn they were roused by the old woman in whose house they lay.

"Get up, my children! A thousand Turkish soldiers have surrounded the village and are searching the houses!"

Deltchev and his companions made ready to fight for their lives. If the Turks found them the village would be put to flames—a fate prescribed for villages harbouring comitadjis; so, instead of resisting until nightfall (the usual tactics) Deltchev decided they should try to slip away unseen. But they came under heavy fire. Deltchev, voivode Gush-tanov and six others fell. The rest retired to a house again and held the Turks at bay until the next small hours, then dashed out suddenly and escaped. Banitza was burnt and twenty-three peasants killed for sheltering them.

Deltchev died by treachery. The Strumitza IMRO committee had once condemned Petar Belev and Ivan Topalov to death as Supremist agents, but Deltchev had lectured and released them. Before going to meet Deltchev voivode Gush-tanov, trusting them now, told them to bring food to Banitza; whereupon they hurried to Seres and told the Turkish Commander.

Yavorov, very downcast, went secretly with Sandanski to buy supplies in Sofia with money Miss Stone had sent him from America. It was dangerous because Sandanski had many Supremist enemies. In May they returned to Macedonia with forty young volunteers, and porters carrying explosives. It was hard to cross the border, for patrols were alert. A porter fell over a precipice. They shot a bear.

For weeks Yavorov roamed with Sandanski, editing his paper by camp-fires in the forests of Pirin. Sometimes they took a sheep from some disloyal man's flock; sometimes, hunted by Turks, they were very short of food. But they were never short of humour. Once one comitadji gave another a letter, solemnly saying he must open it if ever they were without food. One day they were famished. The comitadji opened the letter. Inside was a menu from Sofia's best restaurant!

They thought at first to hold the district congress to elect representatives for a new Central Committee; but eastern Macedonia was too much under Supremist influence and Sandanski would have no dealings with his former Supremist foes. Though a great hero and scrupulously honest leader, Sandanski suspected treachery in everyone. When Yavorov

suggested Sofroni Stoyanov should join them with his twenty-nine men Sandanski replied he would shoot the lot if they came (and in 1904 he attacked Stoyanov, killing several of his men); moreover the suggestion caused Sandanski to distrust Yavorov, to whom he would give no arms with which to re-form the (destroyed) Drama band, telling Yavorov to tax the Drama people and buy arms in Bulgaria.



Damian Gruen (bearded, in the middle of the front row) with a revolutionary band at the time of the Blinden Revolt.

CHAPTER IV

THE FLAMES OF REVOLT

HURRYING from Salonika before the bank went up, Gruev met Sarafov and the Bitolje district delegates (under their President, Alexander Lozantchev) at Smilevo on April 30 (1903). There was violent opposition to revolt. But Sarafov (now an External Representative) swore the Bulgarian Army would help them if they gave a pretext for its intervention and drew 60,000 Turkish troops into western Macedonia, adding a message from Matov (another External Representative) that the War Minister had said the Army would be ready in September. Gruev, an unsuspecting idealist, felt it was better the people should be freed by Bulgaria than not at all.

So at last the delegates were persuaded. There should be a rising in the highlands, but only by organised bands led, whenever possible, by Bulgarian subalterns. But the Bitolje district congress alone agreed upon revolt which, writes Silianov, was wantonly provoked by Sofia. Only eleven days before it began did Premier Ratcho Petrov deny that Bulgaria would support a revolt—a denial the IMRO chiefs thought only a diplomatic ruse; but Prince Ferdinand went abroad to pretend he had no hand in it.

There was a lull before the storm. The Turks thought their measures were succeeding. There was little enthusiasm for revolt; yet preparations were made feverishly, supplies being smuggled from Bulgaria and dumped in secret places. The Turks discovered nothing, though troops with artillery besieged Peev's band for a fortnight in marshes near Kukush, where Peev was storing ammunition.

On July 22 Sarafov and Lozantchev issued a circular telling all voivodi to rise on the night of August 2, *Ilin-den*—St. Elias' Day. "We are taking up arms", it read, "for liberty and humanity. Our action is above racial prejudices, so we must treat as brothers all who suffer the Sultan's tyranny. All Christians are in misery, but no less so the

Moslem peasants." No neutral non-Slav communities were to be molested. Gruev had often contemplated alliance with the Albanians, but the revolt occurred before any serious overtures had been made; however, there were local understandings and most Albanians stayed benevolently neutral. At Okhrid the *Kaimakam*, Mehdi Frasheri (Albania's Prime Minister in 1936) kept such order, with the Exarchist bishop's help, that the town escaped harm and became a haven for refugees.

August 1 was market-day in the towns, so peasants crowded in to buy stores for the Feast. This August there were record crowds buying stores "for the Feast".

Towards sundown on Sunday August 2 Gruev, Sarafov and Lozantchev assembled with 500 men close to Smilevo. A priest celebrated divine service, a great standard embroidered by Bitolje schoolmistresses was unfurled and blessed, then a detachment crept towards the barracks.

A bugle called the Turkish troops to prayer: and after prayer they cried: "Long live the Sultan!"

"Down with the Sultan!" re-echoed a hundred voices. Then rifles flashed in the dusk. A revolutionary in the town set his own house afire, crying he did not want possessions but Christian rights! The Turks fled. The Ilinden revolt had begun. A beacon behind the town burst into flames: then another upon a hill beyond: then another and another throughout the Bitolje highlands. The flames of revolt!

As the beacons flared young villagers took their rifles and rations and went to their assembly points, some with their wives to cook or care for the wounded. Then telegraph wires were cut, bridges blown up, strategic points occupied, convoys intercepted, Moslem landlords' houses burnt, Turkish posts attacked, captured rifles distributed to men who had none. The insurgents kept clear of most villages and towns once the Turks were evicted, the inhabitants carrying on quietly, so many escaped harm; but where many men were in arms, where a village was burnt by retiring Turks, or where neighbouring Moslems seemed hostile, the villagers retired with their flocks and stores to remote places and set up huts. Every sixth man in Bitolje vilayet was in arms.

The Turks were completely surprised—nor had Europeans believed the downtrodden peasants capable of rebelling. There were only 15,000 troops in Bitolje vilayet, scattered mostly in posts from which they fled—those who

could—to Bitolje, Okhrid and Kastoria, towns the rebels dared not attack. But the garrisons were driven from the little Vlach towns of Krouchevo, Klissoura and Nevaska, and from Kitchevo after severe night fighting. Soon the western Macedonian hills were in the rebels' hands.

The rebels had no cavalry nor artillery: but they knew their mountains, trusted their leaders, avoided pitched battles, and operated in bands never more than 1,000 strong; whereas the backward Turks were ill-trained and poor marksmen. The fiercest fighting took place between mid-August and mid-September: but the most notable engagement was fought on September 30, upon Bigla Mountain near Demir Hissar, where 970 Federalists and Supremists heroically opposed 12,000 Turks with artillery.

Sarafov first roamed between Okhrid and Florina with his picked band, then retired to Sofia to drink and brag to foreign correspondents. Gruev remained at Smilevo, which was fortified and defended against three fierce attacks by Lieutenant Stoikov. Gruev had appealed to the Great Powers, through their Consuls in Bitolje, for Macedonia's autonomy under a Christian Governor-General of their choice; he sent to the Consuls regular news bulletins, in French. On the whole Moslem and Grecophile communities were unmolested: though taxes were levied, some Moslem villages round Presba burnt, and some atrocities committed—chiefly by Tchakalarov, who led the Kastoria rebels.

When the beacons flared at pretty Krouchevo 800 men under Pitou Goulé, a Vlach, rushed into the town. The bells in the Exarchist, Patriarchist and Vlach churches pealed, for here all three communities collaborated; then a Vlach raised the revolutionary flag in the market square where the townsfolk flocked to dance for joy. There were only 60 Turks in the barracks, which were rushed and burnt and most of the soldiers killed. Then the three Christian communities elected two members each for a Provisional Republican Government under a Slav President (Nikola Karev) and Vlach Premier (Vanghel Dinu). Four Patriarchists and an Exarchist were executed as spies; but Moslems were protected; and supplies for the fighting men, relief for refugees, and a hospital, were organised.

But in Prilip and throughout the Bitolje valley the people ignored Georché Petrov's and Peré Tochev's appeals to them to rise. Brailsford heard that some villages elsewhere were only induced to revolt "when a phonograph, smuggled into

church on the fatal Sabbath, declared in uncanny tones that it was the voice of Christ who commanded all His followers to rise". Most of the Patriarchist Vlachs, though sympathetic, held back too. Nor would the Skoplje district move; though a mixed band of Serbs and Bulgarians blew up the railway and derailed a troop train, but eventually fled into Serbia.

The Salonika district also stayed quiet, and at first Seres too—for Supremist raids had drawn 20,000 Turks into the Struma valley. But 400 men led by General Tsontchev, Colonel Yankov and Captain Protogerov crossed the frontier and fought on September 1 a heavy engagement at Pirin village. That evening Sandanski, Peev and Stoyanov came up with their bands. Being assured the Bulgarian Army would soon intervene they agreed to co-operate with the Supremists to relieve Turkish pressure upon the Bitolje rebels; so these former antagonists embraced warmly and concerted plans which led to some sharp fighting around Nevrokop.

The Supreme Committee contrived an important diversion in Eastern Thrace. Austria-Hungary and Russia had never brought this region within the scope of reforms proposed for Macedonia, neither wishing the other to gain advantage by weakening Turkish authority so near Constantinople; but the Christians here were Bulgarians whose revolutionary movement was controlled from Sofia. During the early summer Turkish ruthlessness had driven into Bulgaria 20,000 refugees, of whom 1,200 were sent back in bands to the Strandja mountains in mid-August. Bridges and telegraph wires and Turkish posts were destroyed: Ahtopol, Eniada and Vassiliko occupied: forests burnt: and 36 skirmishes fought, in which the rebels lost 46 killed. For a fortnight they held the district, while the Russian fleet came down the coast, lighting up the bands with searchlights and raising high hopes of Russian intervention; but the Russians were bothered only by the murder of their Consul at Bitolje by an Albanian gendarme and when the gendarme had been hanged they steamed away again. Then 40,000 Turkish troops poured into the district to de-Bulgarise it and overawe Bulgaria, burning (Bulgarians say) 66 villages: slaughtering 2,565 men, women and children: and violating or kidnapping a thousand women.

Recovering from their surprise in Macedonia the Turks sent troops against Krouchevo. The town was shelled,

Goulé killed, then the insurgents withdrew. The townsfolk hung out white flags. But the Turks sacked and burnt the Vlach quarter, slaying about a hundred people. Meanwhile 200,000 troops drew cordons round the mountains; but the bands generally slipped through them—though Gruev barely escaped from Smilevo. So the troops were ordered to sack and burn every abandoned village, but spare villages where the people had stayed peacefully; but local commanders fell upon inhabited villages too, massacring, pillaging and burning with horrible ferocity. Every village round Bitolje gave victims—some 3 or 4, others 50 or 60 men, women and children, the aged and infirm. At one village 190 men and women were slaughtered and their children thrown alive into burning houses. The night sky glowed: 60,000 fugitives in the mountains cowered behind comitadjis fighting desperately to defend them, or straggled after their now hunted menfolk: children died in scores upon the mountain tracks. Soon the heroic rebels would bear no more—they wanted to hide their rifles and submit, to spare their families the hell of starvation and winter in the hills.

Late in September the disillusioned leaders ordered their followers to disband, whereupon the Turks stayed their terrible chastisement. The fugitives trickled back with their menfolk to their ruined homes, finding their crops, live-stock and possessions gone, their churches desecrated, wells fouled, schools destroyed. The towns were crowded with starving women and British relief workers helped them much. Macedonians say some 15,000 insurgents had fought 203 engagements between August 2 and November 1, losing 948 killed (as against 494 killed between 1893 and the outbreak of the revolt); but the Turks lost 3,087 killed, having been often ambushed by the more cautious rebels. Of the engagements only 53 occurred outside the Bitolje district, 38 of them in Salonika vilayet near the Bulgarian border. Among 134 Moslem and 492 Christian villages in the most rebellious area, 105 Christian villages were totally destroyed; while among 325,616 inhabitants, 1,778 non-combatants were killed and 51,606 homeless. Non-combatants killed elsewhere in Macedonia numbered 267. Thousands fled to Bulgaria. Not many were arrested—only 1,500 in all Macedonia and Thrace; but the rebel voivodi stayed in the mountains or accepted their Supremist allies' invitation to "rest" in Bulgaria.

Gruev complained bitterly that he had been betrayed and was grief-stricken because he had believed Sarafov's tale of Bulgarian aid. He hibernated near Bitolje, then moved into the town, walking the spy-ridden streets with a price on his head; yet nobody betrayed him. But Prince Ferdinand was gratified, for the least Bulgarised district was crushed and IMRO driven under Supremist control. Nor could Europe ignore this bloody advertisement. Bulgaria, inundated with refugees, warned the Powers that unless "the Bulgarians" under Turkish rule were protected, her Army (partially mobilised) would march to their aid; whereupon Emperor Francis Joseph conferred at Murzsteg with Tsar Nicholas II and in November the Porte accepted the Austro-Russian "Murzsteg Programme" of reforms, providing for international supervision of Macedonia and reorganisation of administrative and judicial institutions "to open access to native Christians, and to favour the development of local autonomies". So 48 foreign officers under the Italian General di Giorgis were engaged to reorganise the gendarmerie, each Power's officers taking a zone allotted after much haggling over "interests" and the British being relegated to the small Drama-Kavalla sector. In April 1904 Turkey agreed to amnesty the insurgents and contribute to the cost of rebuilding their homes, while Bulgaria undertook to prevent bands or explosives from being sent across her border.

But since the reforms did not go well Lord Lansdowne proposed, in January 1905, a limited autonomy for Macedonia under a Turkish Governor and International Board of Control; but Russia and Austria-Hungary whittled down this scheme to financial control, then the Porte declined to accept it. However, an international naval demonstration against Turkey in December led to a compromise scheme which might have worked well had the international control delegates been experienced and united; but the Turks, irritated by this interference, were able to obstruct the rival delegates while venting their annoyance upon the Macedonians. Meanwhile, IMRO forbade labourers to work for less than a fixed minimum wage and individual Christians to be tax-farmers or landowners, while peasants were encouraged to hide taxable goods and villages to buy Moslems' estates collectively.

But IMRO had demanded autonomy and demanded it again in October 1904. Moreover the "more regular group-

ment of the different races"—an aim of the Murzsteg Programme—foreshadowed partition, whereas IMRO stood for unity: likewise the Supremists, who wanted the whole of Macedonia for Bulgaria. So in the summer of 1904 Supremists and Federalists together set to work to "compromise" the reforms, the lull which had followed the revolt (while the revolutionaries conferred) being broken by the explosion of a bomb done up as a parcel in a goods train at Gevgheli and by attempts to blow up the railway near Salonika. Soon, bands under Bulgarian officers and veteran voivodi were roaming Macedonia again, fighting 22 engagements during 1904, 72 in 1905, and 74 between January 1906 and July 1907. The militia, now better equipped and organised by Bulgarian officers, often took part; but the Turkish gendarmerie, reorganised under foreign officers, were more efficient too. There were many stirring deeds and many celebrated guerilla leaders fell, among them Christo Ouzounov, a former teacher and voivode of Okhrid, whose last stand is an epic.

Going from Krouchevo to meet another band from Bulgaria, Ouzounov and his twelve men stayed the night of April 3-4, 1905, at a village. They woke to find themselves surrounded by troops with a gun. All day they resisted. At last their ammunition was nearly spent. They burnt their papers. Ouzounov wrote a note saying he died happily, believing IMRO would triumph. Then his men lined up and, at his word, they all shot themselves. The Turks buried them with military honours.

There was more than one such episode during those years, for comitadjis seldom surrendered. Small bands often held whole battalions with artillery at bay. The Turks made wholesale arrests (though executing few), enforcing curfew hours and restricting travelling; while most Exarchist schools and churches were closed because the teachers and priests were either arrested or forbidden (as suspects) to work. The foreign officers with the gendarmerie, though having no actual commands, checked barbarous reprisals and were generally respected by the revolutionaries. But in July 1907 the British Colonel Elliot had a narrow escape near Drama. While strolling near his quarters he was seized by khaki-clad comitadjis and hustled towards the hills, being told he would be held to ransom. But troops followed in hot pursuit. Elliot, snatching a revolver, suddenly bolted to them, shooting five comitadjis on his way and being hit before reaching safety.

Confusion was worsened by Greek and Serbian bands which came now to stake out national claims and protect sympathisers from forcible Bulgarisation. Hitherto the Serbs had confined themselves to propaganda near their border, while mildly supporting IMRO; but about 1898 Supremist bands had begun to attack Serbophiles, raiding their schools and bullying their teachers. A dispute over a Serb graveyard at Kumanovo in 1899 almost led to blows. To the end of 1902 (writes Georgevitch) over a hundred Serbophiles had been murdered, this total rising by 1909 to over five hundred, among them fifty-three priests and sixteen teachers. The Supremist raiders often killed these Serbophile Macedonians with cruelty no less revolting than the worst Turkish atrocities; and they raided Serbian monasteries and churches, defacing frescoes and burning manuscripts. So the Macedonian Committee in Belgrade sent bands, and soon there were sixteen (about 2,500 men) between the Serbian border and Prilip; but their comings and goings were checked often by hostile Albanians, while the Turks (fearing Serbian influence) acted sternly against them too. However, they often fought Bulgarian bands; in 1904 one of them even wounded and captured Gruev—but Peré Tochev hurried to the rescue and negotiated his release.

The Greeks had never sympathised with IMRO which had executed many Hellenophile Patriarchist spies; and they detested the Supremists whose bands frequently forced whole Patriarchist villages to become Exarchist, murdering headmen who refused and burning recalcitrants' houses. If, at the outset, the Patriarchist Slavs had declared for Macedonian autonomy and supported IMRO (as many actually did) the Supremists would never have gained power in Macedonia, nor would IMRO have been forced to depend upon the Exarchists; but the Greek bishops and clergy and well-to-do Patriarchist Slavs, supporting Greek nationalism which rested, in Macedonia, upon their Church alone (there being few true Greeks north of Kastoria), betrayed revolutionaries to the Turks whenever they dared, while Greek officers clamorously volunteered to help the Turks crush the Ilinden rising. After the rising Greek bishops obstructed British relief workers, saying they would rather the sick and starving perished than help them unless they declared themselves Patriarchists; and they toured southern Macedonia with Turkish escorts, threatening to denounce the terrified villagers as unpunished rebels if they would not become Patri-

archists again: so quite a few did. Whereupon Supremist bands threatened to burn the villagers out if they did not return to the Exarchist fold! Most of them did! So Greece sent bands, thinking she inherited a divine right to Macedonia from the Byzantines. Delegates from Athens had proposed co-operation against the Turks to Federalist representatives, but had been told co-operation was possible only if the Greeks would accept IMRO's aims; to which the delegates had replied that Macedonia could not exist without Greece!

Numerous Greek bands of "andartes" were very active after 1904. Generally recruited from Crete and Smyrna, they were controlled by a committee in Athens and the Archbishop of Kastoria, and often led by Greek officers in uniform—though some leaders were brigands, or deserters from IMRO. They were instructed to purge southern Macedonia of IMRO, to murder Exarchist priests and teachers, to burn, shoot, murder, in short to Hellenise the Macedonians. Many were their clashes with Supremists and Federalists; but they generally avoided conflicts with the Turks who did not bother them overmuch (knowing Greece could never attract the Macedonian Slavs) and sometimes even encouraged them, to check Bulgaria's growing influence.

The Greek Patriarchate's collaboration with Moslem Turks against Christian Slavs appalled many Patriarchist Vlachs, people of superior culture who had sympathised with and ultimately supported IMRO's struggle for Macedonian autonomy—though they had no wish whatever for union with Bulgaria and cared nothing for the Exarchate. About 1890 the Vlachs appealed for Roumanian support, the Turks welcoming this fresh rift among the Christians. By 1905 most Vlach centres had Roumanian schools, while Roumanian became the language of their churches in defiance of the Patriarch. In May 1905, under Roumanian pressure, Turkey acknowledged the Vlachs' right to independent schools and churches, so Greek bands began to terrorise the Vlachs; whereupon Roumania severed diplomatic relations with Greece until Athens forbade its bands to murder more Vlachs.

Few Exarchist villages in southern Macedonia escaped the attention of Greek bands which left behind a couple, dozen or score of corpses to remind the people they were Greeks. Their worst outrage was committed in March 1905, a band 200 strong under three Greek officers sacking

Zagoritchani village (near Klissoura), which had been burnt by Turks after the Ilinden rising, massacring sixty men, women and children. These exploits were narrated jubilantly by the Greek Press. But if Supremists were guilty of fewer massacres it was because the people were Slavs who preferred them to the Greeks. All this savagery completely paralysed the countryside, for terrified villagers fled into the towns, nor dared go to their fields or markets. And to make this confusion worse confounded IMRO was now split, one faction with the Supremists, one loyal to the old aims.

After the Ilinden rising most voivodi had gone to "rest" in Bulgaria: and here, in comfort and security, pampered by Supremists in high places, given lucrative jobs and often bribed, many succumbed to Bulgarian influence. Having no links with the Macedonian peasantry the Supremists had engineered an abortive revolt and now seduced the despairing survivors. Bulgaria never told them she would annex Macedonia, though this was evident to intelligent men; but most voivodi were simple fighters, not thinkers, many of a generation taught by Exarchist teachers or priests to think themselves Bulgarians. Now they had found they could not free their country alone, and Turkish outrages had turned them against the idea of autonomy under Turkish suzerainty. Their families had suffered enough. But Bulgaria promised to help them, sheltered them, controlled their Church: so it was better to combine with the Bulgarians. The miracle is that so many did withstand Bulgarisation. Sarafov himself, hearing Bulgaria had held back because Russia would not support her, even proposed they should all snap their fingers at Orthodox Russia and turn Roman Catholics or Protestants to win the Western Powers' sympathies.

But many voivodi still hoped IMRO's aims might be realised and Macedonia saved from partition—which the activities of Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek bands foreshadowed. Under Georché Petrov, 200 delegates secretly assembled, in August 1904, for Strumitza district Congress and decided that no more help must be accepted from the Supremists. All Macedonians were called upon to reunite against both foreign interference and Turkish repression: Garvanov and Sarafov were hotly blamed for the rising: even Gruev censured for trusting Sarafov: while all agreed that the Central Committee should have consulted the

whole people before so momentous a step. Fresh compulsory taxation was decreed, for arms, and for propaganda—hitherto the Federalist view had been drowned abroad by Supremist propaganda through the Bulgarian Foreign Office.

Several districts shared Strumitza's views; but at a general Revolutionary Congress at Rila Monastery early in 1905, packed with voivodi "spoiled" in Sofia, a majority exonerated Garvanov and Sarafov. Garvanov (representing Skoplje district) was re-elected President of the Central Committee with Sarafov (for Salonika district) and Matov (for Bitolje) as members; moreover IMRO's statutes were amended to merge the Macedonian and Thracian Revolutionary Organisations (an admission of the Supreme Committee's control) and "legalise" the new Central Committee's election by delegates who had no regular mandates from their districts.

Sandanski, Petrov and other old leaders, supported by Gruev (who was doubly indignant because Supremists had lately murdered one of his best friends), declined to recognise these decisions and called another congress in May. As 150 delegates assembled in a forest under Tcherno Peev, a strong Supremist band led by two Bulgarian subalterns came up to quell this "rebellion"; but Peev attacked and drove them back. And so the old struggle began again, both sides claiming to be IMRO. The Congress resolved to resist to the death the Supremists and the Greek andartes too. The president of the Andartes' Committee was condemned to death (and in due course killed); and some delegates wanted to kill the Archbishop of Kastoria also, though most thought this might be misunderstood abroad and decided he should be fined instead. Some proposed too that all Exarchist teachers in Macedonia should be compelled to teach in the Macedonian dialect to emphasise the difference between Bulgarians and Macedonians, but this was voted impracticable.

Sarafov, in Sofia, fell ever more under Prince Ferdinand's hand. While the Bulgaro-Serbian *rapprochement* in 1905 lasted he was in touch with Belgrade, while his bands sometimes collaborated with the Serbs against the Turks; but clashes between Supremists and Federalists were frequent, not a few Supremists being caught, disarmed, and sent back to Bulgaria (if they were lucky).

Then, on December 23, 1906, Gruev was killed. He had been travelling about in disguise with desperate energy,

urging the people not to provoke the Turks. While resting at Roussinovo village he was surrounded and fell fighting with two companions. There was a strong suspicion that he had been betrayed by Supremists. He had lately reached an understanding with General Tsontchev, who had stood by his reconciliation with Sandanski and was no less disgusted than Gruev at Bulgaria's failure to support the Ilinden rising. Like Gruev, Tsontchev suffered eclipse after the rising and died in 1910.

Sandanski now led the "old guard" and Sarafov resolved to eliminate him, asking Mihail Daev, voivode of Drama, to arrange this matter. Daev sent a band under Todor Panitza to murder Sandanski and his friends, but Panitza, a Federalist at heart, warned the Seres district committee and agreed to kill Sarafov and Garvanov instead. In October 1907 these men were formally condemned for splitting IMRO and betraying it to Bulgaria, their death warrant being signed by three members (but not Sandanski) of the revolutionary tribunal which tried them *in contumaciam*. Then, to disarm suspicion, Panitza threw a bomb into a Salonika café where Sandanski was sitting—but Sandanski afterwards finished his drink. Panitza followed news of this outrage to Sofia. On December 11, he called upon Sarafov and Garvanov who, fresh from a conference with Prince Ferdinand, were delighted to discuss a plan for murdering Sandanski; and when they had all agreed upon a good plan Panitza got up, shot them both dead, then escaped.

There was consternation among the Supremists, who were further dismayed when in January (1908) the Bulgarian Opposition parties formed a Government under the Democrat Alexander Malinov and the Minister of Interior (Takev) declined to permit their illegalities—though Bulgarian courts sentenced those implicated in the murder of Sarafov and Garvanov, Peev having been arrested in Bulgaria for interrogation. However, the Supremists organised at Kustendil in March another Revolutionary Congress at which all Macedonian districts (except Seres and Strumitza) and Adrianople province were represented by picked delegates; they elected the moderates Efrem Chichkov, Pavel Christov and the Bulgarian Foreign Office clerk Petko Pentchev as members of a new Central Committee. Matov became again External Representative and ultimately presided over the Supreme Committee, while the absent Sandanski and his friends were declared "enemies of IMRO" and expelled



Yani Sandanski (seated in centre) with other Macedonian Revolutionary leaders and Young Turk representatives at Salonika in July, 1908.

(though most delegates declined to condemn them to death).

Christo Matov, always Bulgarophile, had edited at Skoplje in 1897 a secret paper called *The Bulgaria of San Stefano*; but like Garvanov he had seemed to change his views upon joining IMRO. After the Ilinden revolt he had become an energetic Supremist and won spurious fame by publishing, under his own name, numerous handbooks upon the conduct of guerilla warfare prepared by Bulgarian Staff Officers. He found an eager collaborator in Todor Alexandrov, a young school-teacher in Bulgaria who had been born at Shtip in 1881 and expelled from the Serbian school at Salonika for misconduct.

Meanwhile Sandanski and his friends had agreed with the Young Turks of the Revolutionary Committee of Union and Progress. These progressive Moslems, disgusted with Abdul Hamid's shameful rule, demanded a restoration of the Constitution and full equality for all subjects of the Empire irrespective of race or creed. Sandanski wanted nothing better—for the moment anyway. If these aims were realised the Macedonians might order their own affairs within the Empire.

Macedonia was in turmoil, inter-racial murders in Salonika were frequent. Hilmi Pasha's reforms were not succeeding. So the British Government proposed the appointment of a Christian Governor-General independent of the Porte and more gendarmerie to suppress bands; while King Edward VII met the Russian Tsar in June 1908 and evolved the "Reval Programme" of reforms, providing for limited Macedonian autonomy. But the Young Turks would stand no more chaos nor foreign interference. On July 6 Niazi Bey took to the hills near Rezen with a company of infantry and proclaimed revolt against the Sultan on behalf of all Moslems and Christians alike. The Albanians were already in revolt in the north. Enver Bey joined Niazi, troops sent to quell the rebels went over to them, all political prisoners were released. On July 17 Sandanski and Peev went with their followers to Salonika where they were enthusiastically welcomed by the new authorities. IMRO became legal and revolutionaries from all districts poured into Salonika to celebrate the dawn of liberty. The Sultan restored the Constitution and the Powers dropped their reform programme. Throughout Macedonia the people fraternised without restraint. Turkish

officers and Macedonian voivodi drank together in cafés, comitadjis and andartes embraced. They had fought for liberty—and they had it!

But the chauvinists in Sofia, Athens and Belgrade were alarmed at this threat to their national propagandas. Matov in Bulgaria mobilised 2,000 irregulars; but Prince Ferdinand concerted other plans with Emperor Francis Joseph; so Matov's men disbanded again while Bulgaria proclaimed independence and made conciliatory gestures to soften this blow at Turkish pride, though Supremists hurried into Macedonia to discourage fraternisation with the Turks while organising "Constitutional Clubs"—for Bulgarian propaganda under the Exarchate's auspices. But for two years Russia, working to rally Bulgaria, Serbia and Turkey against Austria-Hungary, successfully promoted Bulgaro-Turkish friendship, Tsar Ferdinand and King Petar visiting the Russian Tsar and then the Sultan early in 1910.

At Turkish elections in August 1908 the Christians won a fair representation. Sandanski, with Dimiter Vlahov, Panitza, Peev, Hadji Dimov and others had formed a Popular Federal Party to work constitutionally for their ideals; and though insisting that the Macedonian Slav dialect should be the educational language among the Macedonian Slavs, they agreed that their schools should be controlled by the Turkish Ministry of Education—whereas Matov's Supremists insisted that all Macedonian schools should be controlled by the Bulgarian Exarchate. At Salonika in September 1908 representatives of Matov's Clubs formulated their demands, which appeared to be reasonably in tune with IMRO's original aims; but behind them lay the determination to exploit all concessions which would make easier the Bulgarisation of Macedonia. Sandanski declared Matov's Clubs were Ferdinand's instruments, whereupon Matov denounced Sandanski's friendship with the Young Turks and sent bands under Bulgarian officers into Seres district to kill his adherents. In September Sandanski was wounded and two comitadjis with him killed.

In April 1909 there was a counter-revolution in Constantinople, whereupon the Turkish Army in Macedonia under Mahmoud Shevket Pasha marched upon the capital, overcame resistance after three days' fighting, and dethroned Abdul Hamid. Macedonian Federalist bands under Sandanski and Peev skirmished ahead of Shevket's troops and with them entered Constantinople—the first Christians to

enter the city in arms against the Sultan since the Turkish Conquest.

Then the Young Turk Government banned political parties having racial aims: for all Turkish subjects were to be Ottomans, without religious or racial distinction. Matov's Clubs were dissolved. Next, the authorities began to assume control of education and the churches: settle upon crown lands in under-populated Macedonia numerous Moslem emigrants from Bosnia, Hertzegovina and Bulgaria: and stop irregular "squatting", and uncontrolled timber-felling. Wise measures; but they checked Bulgarian propaganda, threatened Slav predominance, irritated the peasants and were tactlessly, often brutally, enforced.

So Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian bands reappeared. The Bulgarians' first aim was to crush the Federalists, whom they accused of plotting to murder Tsar Ferdinand. Sandanski was attacked at Salonika in August 1909 and again wounded. One invading band was led by Mihail Daev of Balchik (in the Dobrudja) who had no connection with Macedonia, yet had been nominated voivode of Drama—evidence that the Supremists used non-Macedonian immigrants against the Macedonians. Daev was caught and executed. Another band surrendered to peasant militia co-operating with Turkish gendarmerie.

But in the spring of 1910 the north Albanian tribesmen revolted again, whereupon the military authorities began to disarm the entire civil population. Compulsory military service was introduced to control the male population; while families, friends, or villages which harboured or failed to denounce armed bands were brutally punished. Sofia propagandists say 4,973 Macedonians were maltreated. It soon appeared that the authorities aimed at the "Turkification" of all Ottoman subjects; their ruthless measures drove even the Federalists to despair. Few besides Sandanski now hoped for better things and even Peev left him, forming in Sofia an independent group of old voivodi who collaborated with Matov's bands against the Turks.

During the summer Matov (at the behest of the newly formed Macedonian Section in the Bulgarian Foreign Office) instigated the election of a new IMRO Central Committee representing all opinions except Sandanski's. Todor Alexandrov became President, while its members were Petar Chaoulev (of Okhrid) and (ultimately) Colonel Alexander Protogerov (who replaced Peev). So Supremists and dis-

illusioned Federalists united under the hardly veiled control of the Bulgarian War Office. Alexandrov's job was to provoke incidents justifying a "War of Liberation"; whereupon Moslem bands formed to repel his raiders and added yet another tail to the international dog-fight in Macedonia.

Meanwhile Bulgaria pressed forward preparations for war while negotiating for Russian support; but though Malinov went to Petrograd, Tsar Ferdinand demanded Salonika, Skoplje and Adrianople (and wanted even Vlona and Prizren): demands Russia considered excessive, so negotiations were suspended. There had been negotiations with Greece and Serbia too, but Greece claimed Salonika, Serbia the northern part of Macedonia; whereas Bulgaria insisted upon Macedonian autonomy, opposing partition because she wanted to Bulgarise and eventually annex the whole of Macedonia. So then Ferdinand made overtures to Austria-Hungary which provoked a violent outburst by the Russian Foreign Minister, whereupon they were ostentatiously discontinued.

The Russophile Guechov had succeeded Malinov, with Danev as Foreign Minister. In June 1911 they called at Trnovo a Constituent Assembly to bring the Constitution into line with Bulgaria's declaration of independence. Tsar Ferdinand attended. The Assembly was also asked to amend the Constitution so that secret negotiations and treaties need not be disclosed to the Sobranié. Few saw the danger here, most representatives thinking of secret negotiations to end Turkish persecution of Christians beyond Bulgaria's frontiers; so the Agrarian minority protested in vain. Alexander Stamboliski, Secretary of the Agrarian Union, boldly thundered that the Tsar's presence was unconstitutional and ordered him to leave; whereupon artillery was trained upon the Assembly while the required amendment was voted. The Agrarians remained seated while the Tsar stayed.

That was Ferdinand's last step to absolute power. With the Army, the Revolutionaries and most Parties under his thumb he could do as he pleased. He dreamed of a Bulgaro-Slav Empire and imagined himself Emperor of Byzantium. But Bulgaria was too weak to fight Turkey alone—with both flanks exposed; so he planned to collaborate with Serbia and Greece against Turkey with Russian benevolence; then, when Russia told him to halt, he would turn to Austria-Hungary; that country would support his advance upon Constantinople to thwart Russia, and would eventually help Bulgaria crush

Serbia which disturbed the Dual Monarchy's Slav subjects and lay athwart the route to Salonika.

It became clear that the Balkan States were getting together when the Crown Princes of Serbia, Greece, Roumania and Montenegro attended Prince Boris' coming-of-age (at eighteen) celebrations in Sofia on January 30, 1912. But the initiative had been allowed to come from Greece, Venezelos first approaching Bulgaria (early in 1911) through *The Times* Balkans Correspondent Bouchier, proposing a defensive alliance against Turkey. In September 1911 Bulgaria reached a preliminary understanding with Serbia which had made repeated overtures since 1908; but Bulgaria still insisted upon Macedonian autonomy, though Serbia claimed only Skoplje, being interested chiefly in winning access to the sea through northern Albania. Finally, agreement was reached under the auspices of the Russian Minister in Belgrade, and on March 13, 1912, a secret alliance was signed.

Although Guechov may have negotiated this treaty with sincerity, Tsar Ferdinand certainly never had any intention of abiding by it once Serbia had served his purpose. However, the "two brother-nations" now agreed to support each other if attacked and together oppose the annexation of Turkish territory (in which they were interested) by any third Power. An annex provided that should disorders in Turkey endanger their interests they would intervene if Russia agreed. All territory conquered would be held jointly until partitioned, Serbia recognising Bulgaria's right to territory east of the River Struma, and Bulgaria Serbia's claims north and west of the Shar Mountains. As for Macedonia, should autonomy be impossible, Serbia would demand no territory beyond a line from Mount Golem to Lake Okhrid, a boundary Bulgaria would accept if the Russian Tsar favoured it; though both pledged themselves to accept whatever other boundary the Tsar might fix within the Contested Zone—i.e., between the Shar Mountains and Golem-Okhrid line. The two Allies would ask the Tsar to be arbitrator; and they further agreed (Art. 4) that any unforeseen dispute over the stipulations of this treaty or its supplementary conventions should be submitted immediately to Russia for settlement if a direct understanding proved impossible.

A military convention concluded in July provided that Bulgaria should put at least 200,000 men into the field, Serbia 150,000; and Bulgaria would immediately support Serbia

with 200,000 men if Austria-Hungary attacked her. Against Turkey the entire Serbian Army would operate in Macedonia, supported by three Bulgarian divisions and the Volunteer Corps—but in September the Serbs agreed Bulgaria need send only one division. The Bulgarian Army would operate in Thrace.

An alliance between Bulgaria and Greece, concluded in Sofia on May 29, 1912, provided for co-operation to ensure political equality for Christians in European Turkey, but made no provision for the partition of conquered territory—for the Greeks, like the Serbs, assumed Bulgaria was preparing under Russian auspices to win limited objectives which would not seriously conflict with theirs. Greece agreed to put 120,000 men into the field, while her fleet would threaten Turkish communications.

With Montenegro a military convention only was concluded. Roumania stayed neutral.

Alexandrov's bands, acting upon precise instructions from the Bulgarian General Staff, now collaborated with Greek and Serbian bands against Turkish troops and irregulars; while railways were repeatedly mined, sub-prefectures attacked, bombs thrown. Turkey, beset by the Italians in Tripoli, was further weakened by the Albanians who revolted in June 1912, occupied Skoplje and won autonomy (which cut across Serbian aspirations).

In December 1911 one of Alexandrov's bombs had exploded in a mosque at Shtip, the gratifying consequence being that infuriated Moslems killed (said Bulgarians) 30 Christians and injured 373. Early in August 1912 more of Alexandrov's bombs went off in Kotchani bazaar, killing 6 Christians and only 2 Moslems: but no matter, because a really gory massacre of Christians followed, 39 being killed at Kotchani and 80 elsewhere. These outrages were intended to stimulate the war fever in Bulgaria, give Tsar Ferdinand cause to declare he was reluctantly obliged to intervene, and scare the Macedonian Slavs into believing only Bulgaria could save them from extermination. Thousands fled to Bulgaria and were drafted into a "Macedonia-Adrianople Volunteer Division" (14,670 strong) of immigrants not upon the Bulgarian conscript rolls; whereas Alexandrov disposed of only 2,174 comitadjis—who were all recalled from Macedonia, soon after war began, to join the "Volunteer Division" in case they should oppose annexation. This Division operated in Thrace under General

Genev, Protogerov commanding the 3rd Brigade.

Silianov tells how all voivodi in Sofia were called to meet General Staff officers on September 30 and instructed to lead bands of ten immigrants each (organised by Colonels Protogerov and Darvingov) to cut Turkish communications in Macedonia before war began; but only 500 rifles and little money were given to them. They were surprised at this meanness, some wondering whether the Bulgarians were sending them ahead to be rid of them.

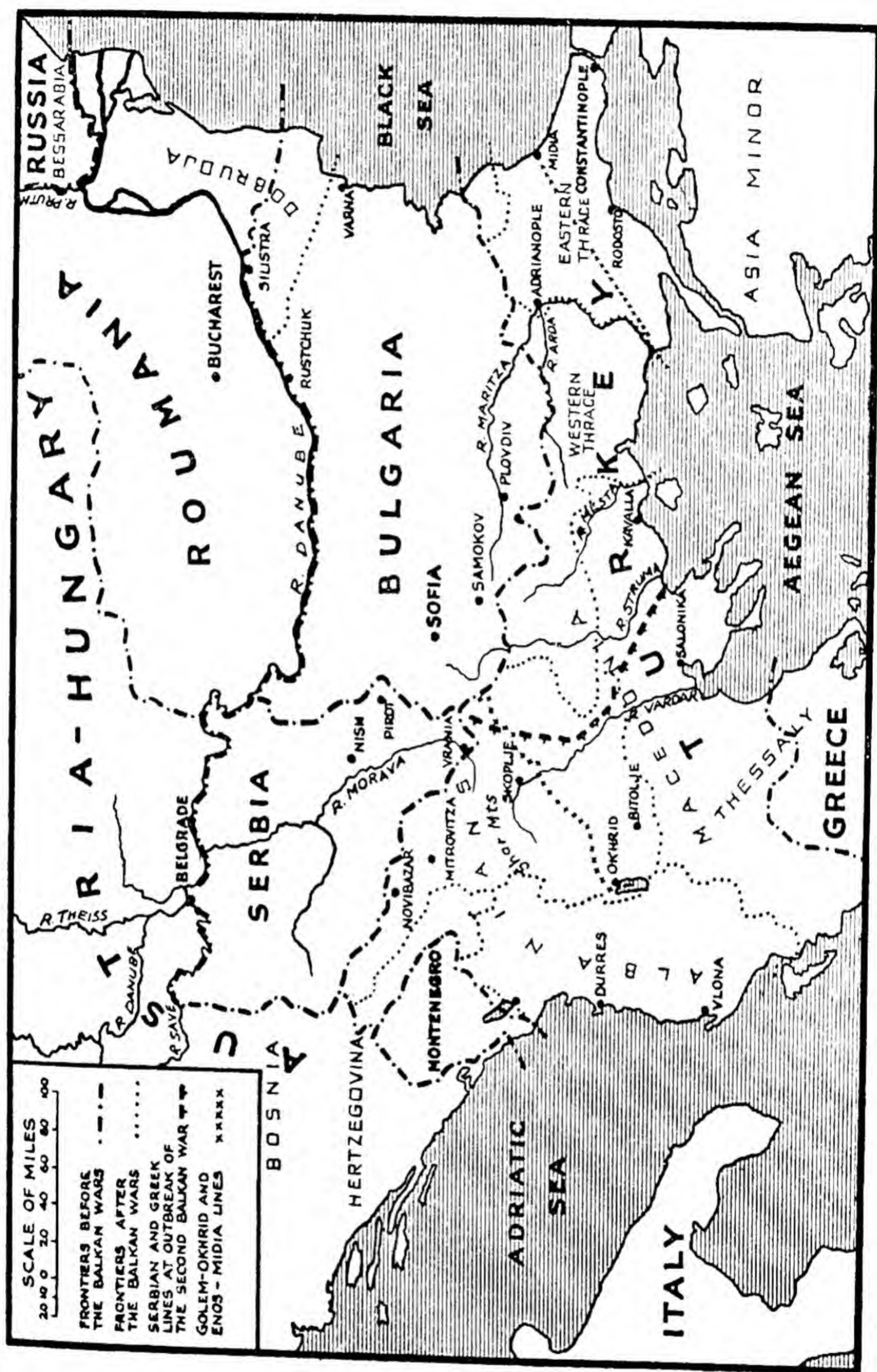
CHAPTER V

BULGARIA RUNS AMOK

ON October 8, 1912, Montenegro suddenly attacked towards Shkoder Lake to anticipate the Great Powers' intervention and make it difficult for Turkey to consider the Balkan Allies' ultimatum presented four days later. The Allies' demands—chiefly for autonomy, with national schools, of Turkey's subject Balkan races under Swiss or Belgian provincial governors and gendarmerie officers—were so framed that while not appearing exaggerated they could not be accepted unconditionally by any Sovereign State; and since Russia had secretly engineered the Balkan Alliance (promoting South Slav solidarity against Austro-Hungarian penetration) and had granted a loan to Bulgaria for war purposes, the Allies could ignore the five Powers' eleventh-hour declaration that they themselves would impose reforms upon Turkey. Since Turkey did not immediately accept their demands the Allies attacked; whereupon Turkey hurriedly concluded peace with Italy.

Tsar Ferdinand had appointed General Savov to command the Bulgarian Armies, with General Fitchev as Chief of Staff. With Ratcho Petrov and others Savov had been expecting trial for corruption (to which Ferdinand had been tacit accomplice), but this appointment placed him above the law. Now he hoped to rehabilitate himself by victory; so Ferdinand, by threatening to supersede him, could compel him to act against his professional judgment.

Brilliantly commanded by General Radko Dimitriev the Bulgarian III Army beat the Turks at Kirke Kilisse on October 22, then again at Lule Bourgas, and arrived before the Tchataldja lines on November 15—though Adrianople still held out; while the I Army forced a Turkish Corps to surrender at Gumuldjina on November 27. But not content with these victories the Bulgarian General Staff invented whole battles in elaborate reports till all Europe rang with Bulgarian prowess. On October 16 an aeroplane appeared



upon active service for the first time, a Bulgarian pilot and observer flying over Adrianople—to the Turks' consternation. Three days later another Bulgarian aeroplane fell in flames; of Bulgaria's 24 military aeroplanes only 4 survived the war.

Meantime the Serbs routed the outnumbered Turks at Kumanovo on October 24 and at Bitolje on November 17; soon they held Macedonia west of the Vardar almost to Salonika. The Bulgarian Division in the Vardar valley won a victory at Kotchani on November 6 and reached Salonika simultaneously with the Greeks.

Russia had warned Bulgaria against attempting to seize Constantinople; yet when on November 11 the Porte asked Bulgaria for an armistice and the Bulgarian Cabinet wished to agree, Tsar Ferdinand declared himself "deeply grieved" and forbade his Government to communicate the request to his Allies. Ferdinand waited for Danev, whom he had sent to concert secret plans with Austria-Hungary which was threatening his Serbian allies! Danev returned on November 14, bringing messages for Ferdinand's ear only. Whatever they were, Ferdinand ordered Savov to assault the Tchataldja lines, a desperate undertaking which broke down on November 18, as Fitchev had bluntly predicted; whereupon he at last authorised negotiations with Turkey, whose request for an armistice had been communicated to Serbia only on November 15 but promptly granted.

An armistice was concluded on December 3: though Greece and Montenegro declined to sign until they had reduced Janina and Shkoder respectively—the only places in the west not in the Allies' hands. The Allied delegates went to negotiate peace in London, Danev leading the Bulgarians; while Ferdinand secretly sent an emissary to Constantinople to propose an alliance against Serbia. But the Bulgarians' reverse at Tchataldja had stiffened the Turks against Ferdinand's demands—he demanded all Thrace to the Midia-Rodosto line, though the population were mostly Turks.

Savov, clearly at Ferdinand's order, had on December 14 reported that the Bulgarian Army was ready for further operations and would be demoralised by inactivity; but General Fitchev, an incorruptible soldier, warned Guechov to the contrary: the Army being wasted by cholera and dysentery — consequences of appalling sanitary arrangements; whereat Ferdinand expressed to Guechov his "profound indignation" at Fitchev's "unworthy and treacher-

ous" statement, saying: "We must renew operations against Turkey . . . we can deal with Roumanian, Greek and Serbian pretensions afterwards." Austria-Hungary was behind Ferdinand now, so Russia's warning that further strife with Turkey would bring nothing but sacrifices was ignored. Whereupon a stronger Government was formed at Constantinople and Turkey prepared for resistance. On January 29 Guechov, at Ferdinand's order, reluctantly recalled the delegation from London. Danev left a memorandum for Sir Edward Grey in which he demanded Rodosto, Dibra: even suggested (ignoring the treaty with Serbia) that Bulgaria should have a common frontier with Montenegro.

Hostilities were resumed on February 3. The Serbian General Staff was nervous of Austria-Hungary, the more so since the Bulgarians had intimated that they would not support Serbia in any conflict with Austria-Hungary over an Adriatic seaport. Yet the Serbs loyally broke with Turkey too, though they had nothing further to gain. In November, at Bulgaria's request, they had sent 50,000 men to Thrace—though the Bulgarians complained they should have sent more, yet would not let foreign correspondents mention the presence of Serbian troops; now they sent thirty-eight siege guns to reduce Adrianople (though the Great Powers had already agreed it should go to Bulgaria).

The Turks, defeated at Bulair on February 8, were soon ready to negotiate again, while the Powers agreed Bulgaria should have a frontier from Enos to Midia; but still Ferdinand would press on, demanding Rodosto, dreaming of a triumphal entry into Constantinople. It had become a war of conquest, not of liberation—"a war on behalf of foreign interests", wrote Petar Todorov.

Since the conclusion of the Bulgaro-Serbian treaty entirely fresh circumstances had arisen. Austria-Hungary, bent upon stifling Serbia, had resolved that an autonomous Albania should bar Serbia from the sea, thus depriving her of half her anticipated gains; so Serbia felt justified in pressing for revision of the treaty to obtain a common frontier with Greece and access through Greece to the sea at Salonika. When Bulgaria had declined, in September, to send more than one division to co-operate in Macedonia, Serbian representatives abroad had been instructed to prepare the diplomatic way for claims to Okhrid and Prilip. During the winter Austria-Hungary, eager to embroil Serbia with her Allies, had actually urged her to annex the Vardar

valley and Salonika (planning afterwards to crush Serbia and so gain that vital line of communication herself); but Serbia had declined. However, Serbia had sent to Thrace aid for which there had been no previous provision, and resumed hostilities in Bulgaria's interest, in expectation that if Bulgaria realised great gains in the east (unforeseen when the treaty was concluded under Russian auspices) she would make concessions in Macedonia. Serbia requested such concessions verbally early in January, officially on March 6: adding that if Bulgaria disagreed, the matter should be settled as provided in Art. IV; but Bulgaria would have no revision. Ultimately Serbia claimed a frontier along the Golem-Okhrid line to the Vardar and all Macedonia west of that river to Gevgheli.

The Macedonian masses cared only for liberation from the Turks. But their leaders were sore when in November 1912 they were allowed to learn of the plan to partition their land. They wanted autonomy (and Alexandrov demanded it)—the Bulgarophiles as a step towards union with Bulgaria, the Federalists for liberty's sake. Certainly no Macedonians wanted to be ruled by the Greeks, aliens by race and language; while Bulgarian influence among them predominated for reasons already explained. Now Bulgaria posed as the champion of autonomy, blaming Serbia for the partition plan—for which the Supremists had paved the way by destroying the Federalist movement. Significantly, Exarchist propaganda had redoubled in Skoplje and the Contested Zone immediately after the Bulgaro-Serb treaty; while petitions to Tsar Ferdinand expressing solidarity with Bulgaria, organised by Bishop Neophyte of Skoplje and probably drafted in Sofia, poured in during November, even from Serbophile centres like Kumanovo.

The Serbs had been welcomed everywhere in Macedonia as kinsmen and liberators, behaved well (writes Silianov) and were helped by local bands; whereas the Greeks disgusted even Grecophile Slavs by their filthy habits and hideous cruelties. Some Supremist bands were shockingly cruel to the Moslems too, and Pomaks were forcibly converted wholesale by Bulgarian authorities. But local bands often protected their Moslem neighbours; in Seres the Turks, before withdrawing, turned the town over to Federalist prisoners, pledging them to protect Moslem townsfolk from Bulgarian bands—which they did.

But unruly elements, unable to distinguish between

liberty and licence, sometimes clashed with the Serbian authorities. Once some villagers raided by night a rich Albanian (who was migrating under Serbian protection) and drove his flocks into the mountains. A friend of mine with the raiders shot a Serbian escorting the Albanian, whereupon the Serbs arrested everyone in the neighbourhood bearing arms. In Sofia this was called Serbian oppression. Early in January the Serbs began to appoint civil authorities, and eventually to supersede Exarchist by Serbo-ophile priests and teachers to stop Bulgarophile agitation.

The Bulgarians and Serbs together stormed Adrianople during the night of March 25; whereupon Russia warned Bulgaria that she might have neither Constantinople nor a port upon the Sea of Marmora and had better suspend operations. Immediately, the Supremists worked up a frenzied outburst against Russia: inveighed against Serbia and Greece: even threatened to murder Guechov, Danev and Tsar Ferdinand himself if they should surrender any part of Macedonia; meantime Savov had written to Ferdinand on March 7 urging peace (for the time) with Turkey and concentration of the Army in Macedonia: adding that neglect of Bulgaria's interests in Macedonia might undermine the Dynasty. All this was, of course, engineered by Ferdinand himself so that he might pretend his hand was forced by public opinion. During February Savov's military discretion had outrun his fear: but Ferdinand had brought him to heel by complaining hotly of him to the War Minister, General Kovatchev. A little later Savov declined to tell Guechov the Army would not let him make peace until Bulgaria got Rodosto; whereupon Ferdinand abused Savov for insubordination, threatening to dismiss him so that he might stand trial—whereat Savov retorted that his trial would certainly reveal Ferdinand's responsibility for the misdeeds of which he was accused.

However, a Cabinet meeting at Adrianople on April 4, at which Ferdinand presided, decided (without consulting the Allies) upon an immediate armistice with Turkey. Negotiations were resumed in London on April 16; but Bulgaria's excessive demands protracted them until Grey angrily warned the delegates to sign peace immediately or leave London. They signed, on May 30. Turkey yielded all territory west of the Enos-Midia line—"an enviable part of Thrace which we did not hope to get", commented the Liberal leader Genadiev.

Meantime the transference of the Bulgarian Army from Thrace to Macedonia had begun. But the Serbian troops in Thrace had the utmost difficulty in getting transport facilities across Bulgaria; they were required to pay for everything in advance, even for the carriage of their dead who had fallen for Bulgaria. Nor did the Bulgarian authorities allow any friendly demonstrations as their Serbian Allies travelled homeward.

Serbia and Greece had no desire for war but prepared to keep all they held, the Serbs strongly entrenching themselves upon the Ovtchepolje. Moreover Roumania was restive. Bulgaria's unexpected gains in Thrace had tempted her to claim the Rustchuk—Shumen—Varna—Silistra "Quadrilateral", but Russia had warned her to be content with the town of Silistra only—though the Bulgarians thought Russia had betrayed them by agreeing to this concession even. On April 22 Russia urged the Allies to demobilise and submit to arbitration. Serbia and Greece were disposed to agree; but Bulgaria, knowing Russia considered she should make concessions, did not reply. A week later Bulgaria was warned that if she attacked her Allies Russia would no longer support her. Generals Savov and Fitchev, backed by Guechov, urged demobilisation now and war in the autumn; Fitchev declared the Army was in no state to fight both Greeks and Serbs. But Ferdinand angrily rebuked them. Danev said demobilisation would "sign the death warrant of Macedonia".

In December Greece had proposed that the Entente Powers should fix the Greco-Bulgarian frontier. Venezelos would let Bulgaria have Kavalla; but she wanted Salonika—"We shall take Salonika in spite of Greece and Serbia," declared Danev: and to the end he declined arbitration. Twice the Bulgarians tried to settle this dispute by force. On March 5 Bulgarian troops attacked Greek positions at Nigrita while the Greeks were celebrating the fall of Janina; though this affair was somehow smoothed over, aggressive acts continued, culminating in sharp fighting near Gevgheli on May 21—but the Bulgarians gained nothing by these local affrays. However, though Guechov's tact averted general war, Greece negotiated with Serbia. On June 1 a Treaty of Alliance was signed, defining a common frontier; Serbia agreed Salonika should be Greek, Greece guaranteed a Free Zone at that port to Serbia.

On May 10 Savov again protested to Ferdinand against

war; whereupon a rumour circulated that he would be court-martialled: while Ferdinand told him secretly that directly Bulgaria attacked Serbia, Austria-Hungary would attack too. Thereat Savov altered his tune. He became Ferdinand's mouthpiece, writing whatever despatches his royal master required for diplomatic use, dictating Ferdinand's will to the Cabinet as if it was the Army's. On May 18 he wrote that the Army could annihilate the Serbs and Greeks: it would tolerate no concessions: Bulgaria must win hegemony: war must be provoked; whereas actually there was serious unrest in the Army which wanted no more war, least of all against the Serbs.

On May 20 Russia again urged immediate demobilisation. Serbia and Greece agreed and on May 26 the Bulgarian Cabinet too, though Ferdinand telegraphed urgently to Savov to speed up preparations for war. On June 1 Savov replied that the Army would be ready on June 13, while *The Times* Correspondent in Bulgaria reported that "war with Serbia is not only eagerly desired, but is generally regarded as inevitable". There followed diplomatic quibblings to gain time. Bulgaria's intentions were too evident; so Serbia and Greece remained mobilised, prepared to meet a surprise attack, printed appropriate proclamations for their troops, but resisted the strategic temptation to attack first.

Prime Minister Guechov, repeatedly deceived, overruled and blackguarded by Ferdinand, declined further responsibility. He told Savov another war would be a crime. Promptly the Supremists led a frantic agitation against him. On May 29 Ferdinand called a Cabinet meeting without him; whereupon he resigned. His successor, Danev, fanned the war fever.

On June 8 the Russian Tsar telegraphed to the rulers of Bulgaria and Serbia that whichever began war would be answerable to the Slav Cause—Serbia would risk her existence because Russia would not defend her from Austria-Hungary: while Bulgaria was warned that if she attacked Serbia, Russia would not restrain Roumania or Turkey. Ferdinand arrogantly retorted that Bulgaria had a "right to Macedonia and a duty to its inhabitants"; but he ignored Austria-Hungary's warning to make terms with Roumania.

On June 22, at Ferdinand's command, Savov reported that the troops were against war and would not remain with the colours for more than ten days—though he needed a week to prepare for an offensive. That same day the Cabinet

decided, at Ferdinand's suggestion, to inform the Russian Tsar his arbitration would be accepted if he gave a decision *within the framework of the treaty at the end of one week*; Danev would meet Pasitch and Venezelos in Petrograd to hear that decision. Simultaneously Ferdinand's favourite, Radoslavov, called in Sofia a great meeting which demanded war and opened violent agitation against arbitration or concessions in Macedonia: while it was said Danev would be murdered if he started for Petrograd; so Danev had public excitement as his pretext for delaying his departure until the 29th. "No talk of brotherhood and Slavdom will stop us shedding blood," wrote Danev's paper on June 25—though admitting that Serbia and Greece had, on the 17th, unreservedly agreed to Russian arbitration.

When the Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov received Bulgaria's impudent message he told the Bulgarian representative angrily: "You are acting upon Austria's advice . . . Russia and Slavdom are rejected . . . the Emperor did not expect an ultimatum with a time limit, though he was ready to fulfil his difficult task as quickly as possible . . . henceforth expect nothing from us and forget the existence of all engagements between us." The Emperor declared he would arbitrate as he thought fit; he would announce his decision when the three interested States' Prime Ministers arrived.

Ferdinand had appointed his War Minister, Kovatchev, to command IV Army facing the Serbs upon the Ovtche-polje. On June 17 General Kovatchev ordered his officers to prepare their men for attack upon their "perfidious allies" by sending agitators among them, adding that Serbian morale was evidently low because the Serbs had not attacked while the Bulgarians were concentrating! This agitation led to local incidents, the most serious on June 25, when Bulgarians fiercely attacked Serbian outposts near Kotchani but were repulsed; they pretended comitadjis were responsible.

Late on June 26 Savov issued Operation Orders. The general idea was to improve the Bulgarian military position and so force the Russian Tsar to favour Bulgaria's claims. If his decision was unsatisfactory, operations would continue.

On June 28 Bulgarian and Serbian officers—allies still, they supposed—met here and there to dine together; the while Savov, acting reluctantly upon peremptory written instructions from Ferdinand, ordered Kovatchev to surprise

the Serbs before dawn, take Veles at all costs and establish a bridge-head beyond the Vardar. Kovatchev's troops attacked with ferocity, bayoneting prisoners and inflicting 3,200 casualties upon the Serbs. Simultaneously General Ivanov's II Army attacked the Greeks towards Gevgheli, under orders to advance on Salonika if the Serbs were driven behind the Vardar.

Meantime Tsar Ferdinand had left Sofia for the provinces—an habitual move to prove innocence. At Varna a Russian gunboat waited for Danev; but Danev bounced into General Dimitriev's III Army Headquarters near Sofia, exclaiming merrily: "I have splendid news! The advance began this morning. After a couple of days I shall go with Tsar Ferdinand to Salonika! The Greek and Serb Premiers can meet me there instead of dragging me to Petrograd. I am here this morning to hide from the Great Powers' Representatives in Sofia who believe I have started for Petrograd. We want them to think Savov attacked the Serbs and Greeks without the Government's consent!"

Serbian and Greek protests during the 29th were ignored, the Foreign Office (which Danev controlled) telegraphing abroad that the Serbs and Greeks had attacked! Other members of the Cabinet appear to have known nothing of the facts until late that evening. Next morning Danev, hearing the Serbs held their positions, reappeared "from Varna" and agreed with his colleagues to suspend operations immediately. Russia was begged to restrain the Roumanians and Turks; but Russia declined to support Bulgarian claims beyond the Vardar River or Kavalla, limits Danev hesitated to accept, hoping still for Austro-Hungarian aid. "I would never have ordered the attack," said Ferdinand afterwards, "if Berchtold had not assured me that directly we began, Austria-Hungary would attack Serbia too"; but Germany and Italy, Austria-Hungary's allies, declined to support an adventure which meant war with Russia.

Not until July 1, when the attack was breaking down, was Savov (very politely) ordered to stop fighting; but the infuriated Serbs and Greeks now declared war and counter-attacked vigorously, defeating Kovatchev on July 7. Bands harried the Serbs' rear; so eight villages which harboured them were burnt, 200 of their accomplices shot, 600 Bulgophile agitators deported. But the Greeks retaliated ferociously for Bulgarian outrages, cutting off Slavonic noses and ears wholesale and butchering 250 peasants in a school

at Seres; Bulgarians say they wrecked 161 villages between Salonika and Gorna Djoumaia, driving 70,000 fugitives into Bulgaria; so Sandanski's Federalists resisted them stubbornly, heroically covering the withdrawal of fugitives and Bulgarian troops through the Kresna defile.

On July 3 Savov was superseded, officially for attacking without authority! His successor Radko Dimitriev, by thrusting boldly towards Nish, soon threatened Serbian communications; but the Serbs besieged Vidin, the Greeks reached Gorna Djoumaia. The Greeks might have been trapped disastrously had not Bulgaria been overwhelmed from the rear. Danev had snapped his fingers at the Roumanians, believing Austria-Hungary would restrain them; but on July 10 Roumanian troops crossed the Danube and reached Araba Konak Pass near Sofia unopposed. Then the Turks advanced too, compelling Bulgarian covering troops to abandon Adrianople to them.

So Danev resigned, saying his policy had gone bankrupt. On July 17 the Austrophile Radoslavov formed a Cabinet with Genadiev as Foreign Minister—at Ferdinand's order they had declared Austria-Hungary was Bulgaria's only hope; but Austria-Hungary advised Ferdinand to make peace and wait. So Bulgaria accepted terms dictated by Roumania and on July 31 hostilities ended. Peace with Serbia, Greece and Roumania was signed at Bucharest on August 10 (1913): with Turkey at Constantinople in September. A Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry, sitting at Agrarian insistence, found Ferdinand responsible for what Guechov called criminal folly and exonerated Savov. "The disaster was caused by the court camarilla, a well organised net which enmeshes the Army and all social institutions," wrote General Vazov.

Of her conquests Bulgaria retained the Struma and Strumitza valleys in Macedonia and a short Aegean coastline, but had to yield to Roumania southern Dobrudja with 280,000 inhabitants (many of them Bulgarians). Her net increase of population was 413,889, of whom a majority were Moslems (Turks or Pomaks). She put her losses at 53,825 killed and 104,000 wounded, though half of them were needlessly sacrificed or died of shocking neglect; whereas the Serbs, caring better for their troops, lost a third of these numbers. Turkey recovered Thrace to the Maritza and expelled the Bulgarian inhabitants so that Bulgaria should have no further claim there. Greece and Serbia partitioned

most of Macedonia, a tragedy for the Federalists. Strumitza, staunchly Federalist, went to Bulgaria: Seres, equally Federalist, to alien Greece: while Serbia kept Bulgarised Shtip because it had been under the Serb Patriarchate.

To Alexandrov's followers it seemed now that only through Bulgaria's ultimate victory over Serbia and Greece could Macedonia be reunited; and the Bulgarians, by letting them do as they pleased in Bulgaria's share of Macedonia (Petritch Department), encouraged them to believe Bulgaria truly stood for Macedonian autonomy. But bands of them, penetrating to the Serbs' rear during the summer, had found that most peasants, liberated from the Turks, accepted Serbian rule with relief.

However, some of these bands, led by Chaoulev and others, rallied the Slavs of Okhrid and Struga in support of the Albanian rising against the Serbs in western Macedonia during September. At Okhrid they set up a local government and, with Albanians and Turks, held the hills towards Rezen for four days; then Serbian troops drove them into Albania. The Serbs behaved ruthlessly towards the Albanians; but against local Slavs they were not severe, shooting only a score of those who had helped the raiders—and soon pardoned all survivors.

But on October 4 the Serbs decreed a Law for Public Security; it ordered the deportation of families which helped raiding bands or of which one member had joined a band, also drastic penalties for all found with arms or committing even trivial hostile acts. Bands of Serbophiles were formed to hunt Bulgarophile bands and enforce this draconian law; they crucified a Bulgarophile priest here, mutilated another there and generally behaved with all the ruthless cruelty of their opponents.

These measures, designed to crush IMRO and the will for independence it had fostered for twenty years among the younger Slavs, merely exasperated the people while driving IMRO leaders to further collaboration with the Supremists. During the spring of 1914 Alexandrov and Protogerov worked hard to reorganise IMRO in Macedonia; soon their men roamed the countryside in threes and fours, preaching hatred of the Serbs and promising early "liberation", activities made easier because the Serbs had appointed many native officials who lay still under IMRO's spell. But all caught aiding these bands were shot.

Early in 1914 the Serbian Government extended con-

scription to Macedonia. One of IMRO's allotted tasks was to incite men against service with the Serbian Army and help them escape to Bulgaria through carefully planned "canals" of communication from one Bulgarophile village to another. Young men reared in Turkish anarchy resented Serbian discipline; they (and their families) were warned of horrid fates when the Bulgarians "liberated" Macedonia if they joined the Serbs, told (deceitfully) they need do no military service in Bulgaria. So several thousands (many of them Moslems) fled to Bulgaria or Albania or took to the mountains; while conscripts from Bulgarised districts sometimes demonstrated for Tsar Ferdinand in Serbian barracks, one group declining to swear loyalty to Serbia even when made to dig a grave for themselves before a firing squad. The Serbs distributed these recalcitrants to different units.

Hardly had peace been signed between Bulgaria and Turkey than there were indications of understanding between them. Bulgarian claims to Thrace were dropped, while the *Supreme Committee for Macedonia and the Province of Adrianople* became the *Macedonian National Committee*. This committee began a violent propaganda against Serbia and Russia; then on March 24, 1914, it concluded with the Young Turks a definite agreement for joint revolutionary operations against Greece and Serbia (though the Central Powers soon vetoed action against Greece). Turkish representatives were attached to IMRO committees, Turkish and Bulgarian staff officers toured the frontier with IMRO leaders, rifles were distributed to Moslems in Bulgaria's newly-annexed territories—some 40,000 rifles in Thrace and 20,000 in Petritch.

In Vienna, towards the end of 1913, Tsar Ferdinand had promised Emperor Francis Joseph that henceforth he would stand with Austria-Hungary and Germany, being promised in return an early opportunity to retrieve his fortunes and a pension if his country should throw him out. In July 1914 the Emperor wrote to the Kaiser that Bulgaria was with him while Ferdinand ruled: though he complained that he had been obliged to promise Ferdinand territory even beyond his first extravagant pretensions.

In December 1913 the Radoslavov Government held elections in the usual manner, yet lost them! Radoslavov resigned. Whereupon Ferdinand dissolved the *Sobranié*, then recalled Radoslavov who held fresh elections in March. Unconstitutionally, the newly-annexed territories were

allowed to vote, returning thirteen Moslem deputies; like thirty-seven returned by the Turkish constituencies in Bulgaria proper, they were swayed by Turkish influence to support Radoslavov who thus gained a majority of seven over the combined Opposition (though only 345,730 votes were cast for him and 418,058 against).

A majority was necessary to sanction the German loan Radoslavov had arranged. The Opposition clamorously opposed it (in July 1914), knowing it bound Bulgaria to the Central Powers. There were wild scenes in the Sobranié. Eventually the Bill was read by a mumbling secretary and rushed to the Palace for Royal Assent, the while Radoslavov stood with revolver in hand and Opposition deputies hurled books and inkstands at Ministers' heads with such preoccupation that they did not realise what was happening.

Stamboliski, leader of fifty-one Agrarian deputies, thundered that Tsar Ferdinand should be hanged for ordering Savov to attack the Serbs; but Ferdinand played so skilfully that he set the Opposition leaders by the ears till each was blaming the other for that disaster. Meanwhile he did as he pleased. He even incited General Fitchev to murder Savov, rebuked the Foreign Minister Genadiev for preventing the murder of Todor Todorov, then reproached the War Minister for not arranging the assassination of the Ententophile Genadiev whom Radoslavov quietly blackmailed. (Logio, p. 402, quoting Protocols of State Trials). Late in 1914 Genadiev, returning from western Europe, opined that Germany would lose the War; but Ferdinand and Radoslavov let him know that his opposition to alliance with Germany displeased: whereupon he resigned, leading thirteen Liberal deputies to the side of Stamboliski's Agrarians. He worried Radoslavov so much that he was eventually imprisoned for alleged malpractices and remained in gaol until November 1918.

Directly Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia on July 28, 1914, Emperor Francis Joseph called for Ferdinand's co-operation. Though no formal alliance seems to have been signed before September 6, 1915, their understanding was so definite that the Kaiser noted, upon a telegram to King Constantine of Greece on August 2, 1914, that he was in secret alliance with Bulgaria and Turkey against Russia. However, Bulgaria required time to reorganise. But the international situation was the pretext for the proclamation of martial law and a censorship on August 7, 1914. That

same day Bulgaria signed a secret alliance with Turkey which gave her the railway to Dedeagatch; then she allowed military supplies for Turkey to be smuggled across her territory in closed railway vans for the defence of the Dardanelles, while declining to let Russia send help by her railways to Serbia. Intensive Germanophile and Russo-phobe propaganda was encouraged, but all the Entente Powers' overtures were withheld from the public.

Agrarians, Democrats and Liberals, standing for neutrality or for the Entente Powers, worked together against Ferdinand's evident intentions, demanding a coalition government. In September 1914 Stamboliski had his first audience of Tsar Ferdinand. "You are against the Dynasty," said Ferdinand. "You have no proof," answered Stamboliski. In August 1914 General Radko Dimitriev, Bulgaria's Minister in Petrograd, volunteered for service with the Russians and took command of an Army Corps in Galicia. In the Bulgarian Army an Officers' League was organised by the late General (then Colonel) Lukov to oppose another disastrous war; but Ferdinand had its members dispersed to provincial garrisons before they could act. Lukov had once remarked: "Ferdinand ought to be killed"; to which a friend of mine answered: "You are in the best position to see to that." In January 1915 a bomb did explode at a ball Ferdinand was attending; four innocent people were killed and two reserve officers publicly hanged for the attempt, though they never told who was behind them.

The Italian Premier Nitti once said the Entente representatives in Sofia were "monocled men who knew nothing and understood nothing and crystallised in their incoherence, ignorance and incompetence". If the description was apt one hopes similar men may not allow history to repeat itself. Large sums were apparently squandered to suborn Bulgarian politicians, yet Ferdinand and a minority government were able to drive Bulgaria into war at Germany's side. Bulgaria, a vital link between the Central Powers and Turkey, saved the Dardanelles for them by double-dealing; by virtue of her strategic position she overthrew Serbia, blocked a vital communication with Russia and Roumania, prolonged the World War by two years.

Only once did Ferdinand seem to waver in his allegiance to the Central Powers. In the spring of 1915, when the Entente Powers threatened to break through the Dardanelles, he manœuvred for safety, pretending Bulgaria waited only

for a favourable moment to join Russia; but his manœuvres inspired no confidence. "If Bulgaria takes the side of Germany, Russia may forgive her but England never will," the British Minister Sir Henry Bax-Ironside told Agrarian leaders; yet Bax-Ironside seems to have worked for the limited objective of Bulgarian neutrality, whereas Russia and France strove to secure her active support and eventually obtained his recall. Such misunderstandings helped Ferdinand. When serious efforts were made, during the autumn of 1915, to win Bulgarian support it was too late, for the Central Powers' prospect of victory had risen, Greece and Roumania no longer threatened Bulgaria if she attacked Serbia. Bulgaria demanded the whole of Serbian Macedonia to the 1912 treaty line (nor mentioned autonomy); but even had Serbia been ready to buy her support at this preposterous price while Serbian claims were being whittled down to bribe Italy, it may be doubted whether Ferdinand and his Supremists would not then have asked for more. On September 14, 1915, the Entente Powers did reluctantly offer to allow an immediate Bulgarian occupation of Macedonia to the Vardar River: a frontier along the 1912 line after the War (provided Serbia gained the Slav provinces of Austria-Hungary): the Enos-Midia line from Turkey: and diplomatic support for Bulgarian claims to Kavalla and southern Dobrudja; but the Central Powers had offered greater bribes; nor did Ferdinand overlook the eventual danger to his Dynasty of entente with the Bulgarians' Serbian brother-Slavs.

On May 24, 1915, Protogerov, Alexandrov, Matov and Professor Miletitch, meeting in Sofia, finally decided to work by all means to bring Bulgaria into war upon the side of the Central Powers—a decision reached, it would appear, when Ferdinand received 30,000,000 marks from Germany for the formation of a "Macedonian Volunteer Division" to crush any popular Bulgarian movement against war. But right from the beginning of the World War IMRO had been active, being liberally financed by the Austro-Hungarian Legation in Sofia. Bands operating from the Strumitza salient had begun to "punish criminals and calm the popular conscience" (wrote Parlitchev) by blowing up bridges and sections of the Salonika-Skoplje railway upon which the Serbs depended for all supplies from abroad; so conflicts began near the Bulgarian frontier between bands and Serbian patrols, though there were few engagements west of the

Vardar where the vast majority of Slavs remained entirely passive. In fact many of these bands consisted largely of Turks. About Doiran there were 2,400 armed men (many of them Turks) under two Turkish Beys, who prepared defensive positions in the hills.

Parlitchev (writing in 1917 to impress the Central Powers) tells that IMRO began an offensive just before Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia in 1914, blowing up a railway bridge near Demir Kapir. On August 16 the railway was dynamited near Veles and thereafter repeatedly attacked. In November a band surprised Serbian patrols guarding two railway bridges in the Demir Kapir gorge, which were blown up. But the most important raid was made in March 1915, against a great steel bridge over the Vardar near Udovo village, west of Valandovo.

The bridge was guarded by entrenched Serbians, their reliefs being quartered in Valandovo and neighbouring villages. A mixed force (about 2,000 strong) of Bulgarians, Macedonians and Turks, commanded by Bulgarian and Turkish officers and voivodi, advanced in the night. Part of this force rushed the Serbian posts, the remainder ferociously massacred the sleeping reliefs. Fighting continued all night and next day. A captured gun was turned upon the Serbian positions but the Serbians held out until reinforcements arrived. However, the Bulgarians and Turks prevented those reinforcements from crossing the bridge to attack them until nightfall, then withdrew to Bulgaria, leaving 28 dead and the bridge still intact; but the Serbs had lost 7 officers and 470 men, most of them surprised in their billets.

This treacherous attack from neutral Bulgaria provoked an indignant protest from Sir Edward Grey, but Bulgaria replied that it had been "an internal revolt"! The exasperated Serbs took counter-measures—Parlitchev whines that a curfew was enforced (at places along the line) which caused hardship to mothers suckling babes or nursing sick children! Knowing Ferdinand's intentions the Serbs in vain implored their allies to let them seize Bulgaria's capital and railways before she mobilised.

The Federalists strongly disapproved of such raids and Sandanski (in touch with Stamboliski) did his best to prevent Macedonian Slavs from being involved. He paid the price. On April 10, 1915, at Matov's order, he was ambushed near Melnik and shot by men under Stoyan Filipov. Thousands

attended his funeral at Rojhenski Monastery, deeply grieved to lose one who had worked for the poor and oppressed; but his memory (like Yavorov's) is scorned in Sofia. His friend Georghiev, who had been elected Democrat deputy for Strumitza despite Alexandrov's terrorism, was assassinated in October for the same reasons.

On August 17 the War Minister, Fitchev (who was against further adventures), was dismissed by Ferdinand, officers with like opinions superseded by Ferdinand's Supremist satellites. Generals Jekov and the Macedonian Jostov became respectively Commander-in-Chief and Chief of Staff. On September 6 a treaty and military convention were secretly signed with the Central Powers: it being arranged that Gevg'heli and Doiran should go to neutral Greece (no scruples here about partitioning Macedonia), while the Bulgarians should occupy Rupel, Drama and Kavalla for strategic reasons. Then on September 16 the "Macedonian Volunteer" (XI) Division was mobilised in Sofia under General Zlatarov (of Okhrid)—33,764 officers and men, well paid Supremist Macedonians and chauvinist riff-raff from the towns, ready to quell any Bulgarian opposition to mobilisation.

The Opposition parties had redoubled their agitation against war, the Agrarians planning a general railway strike; but against the Government and "Macedonian Volunteers" they were powerless. On September 17 Ferdinand received the Opposition leaders, who made one last bid for peace. Malinov spoke firmly. But boldest was Stamboliski; he concluded by shouting: "You will answer with your head for the evils your policy will bring upon Bulgaria"; to which Tsar Ferdinand answered: "Don't worry about my head. I am old. Think rather of your own."

On September 21 mobilisation was decreed. Many peasants supposed they went to help Russia, so reported happily, cheering the statue of the "Tsar Liberator" in Sofia on their way to barracks. Foreign Representatives were told Bulgaria mobilised to preserve neutrality and on October 4 Radoslavov coolly asked for further particulars of the Entente Powers' offer! This was too much. The Entente Representatives retorted by requiring Bulgaria to break with the Central Powers immediately. With simulated indignation Radoslavov protested that Bulgaria's relations with the Central Powers were no more than ordinary! On October 7 the Entente Representatives left Bulgaria.

On October 14 Tsar Ferdinand entered the Sobranié to read the *ukase* declaring war upon Serbia. Stamboliski leapt to his feet, crying: "You shall not read that *ukase*! It means the end of Bulgaria." He was arrested with Alexander Obbov, Nedelko Athanassov, Raiko Daskalov and other Agrarians and condemned to life-long imprisonment, while Bulgarian troops crossed the frontier to co-operate in the great Austro-German offensive which drove the Serbian nation into exile through Albania. Thereupon Great Britain, France, Italy and Russia declared war upon Bulgaria. When her troops realised they fought against Russia many mutinied and hundreds were shot.

Before war began IMRO agents had reported Serbian dispositions, while deserters from the Serbian Army were enrolled in "partisan detachments"—under the control of the Bulgarian General Staff through Protogerov. On September 25 Protogerov telegraphed from Sofia, through military headquarters at Kustendil, to Anghel Ouzounov, voivode controlling comings and goings across the border, that he was to order all bands in South Serbia to begin, on 28th, cutting all telegraph and telephone wires and to keep on cutting them until hostilities began. Ouzounov sent instructions by couriers, warning the bands of severe penalties for failure to "do their duty", adding that immediately hostilities began they were to place themselves entirely at the disposal of Bulgarian commanders. The bands sent back balls of wire to prove their energy; they reconnoitred and skirmished ahead of the Bulgarian troops.

Dontcho Anghelov, Petar Chaoulev, Pavel Christov and Ivan Brlio were the chief voivodi in the field. Anghelov captured two guns at Kratovo. Brlio, who had served the Turks and Serbs in turn as a policeman and was now eager to show what he could do for the Bulgarians, seized Shtip when the Serbs evacuated it, then drove back a French patrol from Salonika. Chaoulev and Christov occupied Krouchevo ahead of the Bulgarians. But these bands' achievements are hardly noteworthy and there was nothing even faintly resembling a Macedonian rising against the retreating Serbs.

But many Bulgarised Macedonians did serve in the Bulgarian Army—Bulgarians say 755 officers and about 80,000 other ranks; but these exaggerated figures include (as do "refugee" statistics) Slavs from Thrace and the Dobrudja too. Among them were 33,764 "Macedonian Volunteers": conscripts from Petritch Department: and 22,445 men con-

scripted from occupied territory and distributed to different units, where their loyalty might be watched.

Overwhelmed by the Austro-German Armies from the north, driven from their homes, stabbed in the back by the Bulgarians, the Serbs reacted fiercely against civilians, Serbian subjects and therefore traitors, who harassed them or helped Bulgarian bands. In 1917 Parlitchev published 196 pages (in French, for foreign readers) naming Macedonians killed *or maltreated* by the Serbs between 1912 and 1915; to heighten the shattering effect there are photographs (some reproduced twice) of burnt villages and the decomposing corpses of raiders killed in the attack upon Valandovo. However, villages are sometimes burnt and belligerents killed even in the best-regulated wars. Most of those named had been arrested (but mass arrests are a Bulgarian habit): beaten: "carried off for military service and had not returned" (naturally, in 1917): or just "had suffered"—but how is not told, though their full names, ages, date and place of "suffering", at whose hands and for what (Parlitchev's version) are all impressively stated. Many were Turks or Albanians, whose names end in *ov* or *ev*! Parlitchev seems to claim that about 1,500 were killed, mostly near the Bulgarian frontier; but even double this number is few for three years of guerilla warfare. He says that in Skoplje the Serbs executed and buried a score of Bulgarophiles, but when the Bulgarians arrived they dug them up again—and a photograph of their rotting corpses is the trump card in this astounding yet typical book of propaganda.

The Bulgarians say they were welcomed throughout Macedonia with "delirious joy"; yet these "liberators" (admitted Radoslavov afterwards) were soon at loggerheads with Austria-Hungary because they claimed the Albanian towns of Prizren and Prishtina. Serbia was to be partitioned with Austria-Hungary. Macedonia was annexed to Bulgaria—none dared speak of autonomy now; but many Macedonian officials were installed, Alexandrov's comitadjis served as gendarmes. Of IMRO Central Committee Alexandrov (who received the Iron Cross from the Kaiser personally at Nish) was a Sergeant: Protogerov a General: Chaoulev Police Commandant at Okhrid; while Georché Petrov and Naoum Tomalevski were Mayors respectively of Bitolje and Krouchevo: Dimiter Vlahov, District Governor of Prishtina: Mihail Monev a sub-prefect: Pero Shandanov, Pancho Mihailov and Yordan Giurkov subalterns—of whom more

anon. Some behaved very well; but the fanatical Supremists among them were savages—though Bulgarian Agrarians say they merely obeyed General Jekov who on October 17, 1915, ordered "the extermination of Serbian intellectuals—deputies, priests, doctors, officials, teachers, lawyers, etc. . . . destroy this order after reading and giving effect to it."

In June 1935, with two Bulgarians, I was being shown Skoplje by the Macedonian mayor. As we left a church a black marble tablet covered with names caught my eye. Calling the mayor I asked whose names they were. "Hush," he answered. "Don't draw the Bulgarians' attention—that might offend them. Those are the 104 priests the Bulgarians massacred at Sourdolitza village during the war."

It is said in Belgrade that the Bulgarians massacred 20,000 old men, women and children. Though this may be an exaggeration, it is true that Serbians and Serbophiles who had not fled, nor fell into the hands of (the many) humane Bulgarian officers, or declined to accept Bulgarian nationality, were butchered in batches by murder gangs; their women were systematically raped to Bulgarise the land. In October 1915 Brlio, ordered by the Bulgarian Commandant of Shtip, massacred 87 Serbian wounded; 500 prisoners were slaughtered near Pirot; by the end of 1915, 138 priests who had remained with their flocks had been cruelly butchered; Archbishop Vikent of Skoplje, arrested by an officer, was murdered with the apparent connivance of a Bulgarian bishop who is said to have remarked: "For fifty years we will cut throats and burn. Then we will pray." A revolt in the Skoplje-Pirot district, provoked early in 1917 by Bulgarian brutality and headed by the Serbian voivode Kosta Pechanitz, was crushed by more wholesale massacres and the burning of villages. A third of the Serbian prisoners of war in Bulgaria are said to have died. But no more need be said, for that suffices to indicate that the Bulgarians are unwise to speak of Serbian atrocities. They ordered exclusive use of the Bulgarian dialect: forbade the Serbian *itch*: carried off or destroyed all Serbian books, pictures and maps: forbade the Slava (a Serbian and Macedonian but not Bulgarian celebration): tried, in fact, to obliterate traces of Serbian kinship with the Macedonian Slavs. Few lamented these "liberators'" departure!

When Roumania went to war against the Central Powers she offered to restore southern Dobrudja if Bulgaria would not attack her; but Tsar Ferdinand wanted northern Dob-

rudja and Bessarabia too, so on September 1, 1916, Bulgaria declared war on Roumania. Roumania was beaten. Bulgarian troops occupied Bucharest with Austro-German forces, often behaving with wanton destructiveness; but the Germans declined to let them occupy *northern* Dobrudja.

Germany, hoping King Constantine's Greece would join her, had restrained the Bulgarians from seizing Salonika while they could. Then the Entente Powers launched the Salonika Expedition: Constantine was deposed: and on July 2, 1917, Greece declared war on Bulgaria. Unable to advance, the Bulgarians held a strong line in the mountains.

Meantime the Commander-in-Chief and Government were at loggerheads, chiefly because the troops were short of food while rapacious ministers and merchants made huge profits upon the supplies Germany incessantly demanded from Bulgaria: demands which also inflicted great hardships upon the civil population and encouraged talk of a separate peace when Germany declined to make over northern Dobrudja. There were mutinies and riots (notably at Sliven) during the summer of 1918, which were bloodily quelled. So Stamboliski and his Agrarian companions in gaol wrote promising Jekov Agrarian support (even if war continued) provided he would overthrow Radoslavov's tottering Government—hoping Jekov would break with Ferdinand and release them. Jekov ignored them; but he denounced the Government's corruption and incompetence; whereupon Ferdinand reluctantly asked Malinov and Kostourkov (respectively Democrat and Radical) to form a Cabinet, on June 21, 1918. Malinov obtained German reinforcements and reorganised food distribution, appointing Protogerov Director of Supplies; but the High Command would not yet agree to a separate peace: while Ferdinand (thinking, perhaps, of his German pension) would not hear of it, though he despaired of victory. Hesitant overtures were made to the Entente during July nevertheless, having encouragement from the United States which had never declared war upon Bulgaria; but the French, knowing Bulgaria would soon collapse anyhow, would make no concessions.

The end came suddenly. By Serbian tradition *Kraljevitich* Marko never died but slept in a cave at Demir Kapir, whence he would emerge one day to liberate and unite the Southern Slavs. Evidently he now emerged. On September 15, 1918, the British, French, Serbs and Greeks broke the Bulgarian line upon the Dobropolje. Overwhelmed by

superior numbers and morale, the Bulgarians were soon throwing down their arms. By 26th, Allied troops were in Veles. French cavalry reached Skoplje, whence Ferdinand had fled to Sofia; he called Stamboliski from gaol and sent him to exhort the troops to hold their positions until an armistice could be arranged. Stamboliski told him: "You must go!" On September 23 General Lukov and André Liaptchev went to negotiate at Salonika. On 29th Bulgaria surrendered unconditionally.

Mutinous troops at Radomir clamoured for a Republic. On September 27 Stamboliski told them Ferdinand should go; then Raiko Daskalov led them upon Sofia, while General Lukov resumed his command of the II Army and advanced from the Rhodopes to co-operate. Martial law was proclaimed, Ferdinand ordered Protogerov to defend Sofia. Protogerov disposed of the Military College cadets and some German troops. Stamboliski sent envoys; but Ferdinand ordered Protogerov to fire and three train-loads of mutineers were destroyed by artillery. Mutinous troops reached the suburbs, then were gradually thrust back to Vladaia; but many Germans fell before Daskalov's ill-led force disintegrated, leaving 3,000 killed and wounded. Ferdinand wanted to decorate Protogerov but he declined reward for shooting Bulgarians.

Ferdinand had retired to the royal train. On October 2 the party leaders all charged Malinov to tell him he must go. He begged to stay—but his friends had deserted him. On October 3 he abdicated in favour of his son Boris; he left the country by train with Radoslavov and an escort of German troops. He was forbidden by the Allies to return; but he lives still, in Germany, his influence ever behind the Bulgarian Throne. He had served the Central Powers so declared a pension from them his due. He received it.

Stamboliski and Daskalov, outlawed and in hiding for two months (until amnestied), were content at Ferdinand's going: so too was General Lukov, who had nearly reached Sofia; so the war-weary troops were easily demobilised. British, French and Italian troops occupied Sofia and Varna; but the Allies had promised that no Serbian troops should enter Bulgaria, the Bulgarians being fearful of reprisals.

On November 19 Malinov was succeeded by Todor Todorov leading a Coalition Government, which Stamboliski joined six months later. No party gained a majority at elections in August; but when Todorov resigned (because

Bulgaria was shorn of his own constituency) the Agrarians (having eighty-five deputies) combined with Guechov's followers to govern, Stamboliski becoming Prime Minister on October 6, 1919. On November 27 Stamboliski signed the Treaty of Neuilly. The Sobranié voted a protest against "this unjust peace", concluding that "it is the duty of the Government to uphold Bulgaria's claims by all means at its disposal in the future".

By the Treaty of Neuilly Bulgaria lost her Aegean seaboard to Greece (a transfer which stimulated Bulgaria's economic dependence upon central Europe); but it was stipulated that "free economic outlets upon the Aegean Sea shall be guaranteed to Bulgaria under conditions to be fixed at a later date". Bulgaria might have had such outlets (a Free Zone at Salonika like Yugoslavia's, or a free port with internationally-controlled communications) had she not invariably insisted that only *territorial* access to the sea would content her. She lost here 213,000 inhabitants (most of whom were Turks or Greeks and only 69,000 Bulgarians). Beyond that she had to yield only Tsaribrod, Bossiligrad (The West Frontier Territories) and the Strumitza salient, to ensure Yugoslav strategic security against further attacks: here losing 92,000 subjects (many of them Federalist Macedonians) whose interests are as well secured in one country as the other, since all are Slavs speaking a common tongue. Bulgaria's frontiers with Turkey and Roumania remained as in 1915. She was forbidden to dispose of more than 33,000 *rifles* for her military and gendarmerie forces; her surplus war materials were confiscated, compulsory military service prohibited, extremely heavy reparations imposed upon her (though Stamboliski soon managed to reduce these by three-quarters). She had lost 115,048 killed since 1915.

Bulgaria's punishment was light compared with Germany's, Austria-Hungary's or Turkey's; yet her Supremists, with sublime effrontery, shrieked that she had been treated unjustly, claiming still that she should receive Macedonia from victorious Serbia.

CHAPTER VI

STAMBOLISKI OVERTHROWN

A BULL of a man with unruly hair, a self-educated and well-intentioned peasant of natural sagacity—that was Stamboliski. Born in 1879, his bold opposition to Ferdinand's absolute powers had brought him to the head of the Agrarian Union; but his unbounded self-confidence: tactlessness towards the professional classes: poor judgment of subordinates: use of all his predecessors' shady administrative methods, in his resolve to end the shameful exploitation of the peasants by the urban minority, led ultimately to his undoing. Nevertheless he was a great statesman whose personality commanded foreign respect. For his country he fought like a lion, protesting angrily at the loss of Thrace and Dobrudja, arguing that compulsory military service was necessary discipline in Bulgaria. Generals Fitchev and Savov and M. Dimitar Stanchov were among his chosen diplomatic representatives.

But though Stamboliski never admitted that Macedonians are not Bulgarians, nor hid his antipathy to the Serbian chauvinists, he sympathised with the Federalists, declared Bulgaria did not want Macedonia, and promised to surrender Petritch Department to an autonomous Macedonia; he argued that only through friendship with Yugoslavia could the Macedonian Question be settled—an idea frowned upon by Italy, by Bulgaria's neighbours, and by the Supremists whom he disliked. Asked angrily in the Sobranié in 1914: "Are you a Bulgarian or a Serbian?" he had answered quietly: "I am neither—I am a Yugoslav. I want the two peoples to live as brothers." Working for collaboration with the Croat and Serb Agrarians he dreamed, wrote his colleague Obbov, of "an integral, democratic and pacific Yugoslavia extending from Mount Triglav to the Black Sea . . . in creating an atmosphere of confidence between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia he believed the foundations of a definite union of the two peoples, brothers by race, could be laid".



Country scenes in Bulgaria. (*Above*) A peasant farmer near Sofia. (*Below*) To end drought "a small girl is . . . draped with greenery" (see p. 21).

Stamboliski's compulsory labour system won world-wide approbation; he established popular itinerant courts, encouraged co-operative effort, balanced the budget, found lands for 50,000 landless families, improved communications, drained marshes; while his Minister of Education Omarchevski is celebrated for his enlightened reforms, which developed instruction in practical subjects and quadrupled the country's educational establishments. But Stamboliski's taxation assessments and property redistribution, though they brought just retribution upon war-time profiteers and corrupt politicians, outraged the moneyed classes and caused the Inter-Allied Commission in Sofia to protest on behalf of foreign capital. Moreover he annoyed the University by limiting entry: the clergy by relegating their college to Rila: and a horde of professional men because he would not give them all official posts.

Stamboliski's first opponents were the Communists; they owed their influence in this land of small-holders to the people's gratitude towards Russia, their liberator, whose language and literature were almost theirs. Indeed many Bulgarians distinguished themselves in Soviet Russia's service, among them Kouzman Stoikov (an Army commander), Krustu Rakovski of Kotel (Governor of the Ukraine, then Ambassador in Paris) and heroic Georghi Dimitrov (of Reichstag Fire Trial fame).

The Bulgarian Communists were heirs to those "Narrow Socialists" among the professional and urban classes who in 1903 had split from the "Wide Socialist" followers of Dimo Kazazov and other moderates. The lack of ideals in high places, war-time miseries, and Bolshevik propaganda swelled their ranks, many educated men and army officers joining them; so they gained 47 seats in the Sobranié in 1919, the Socialists only 28. The Socialist Minister of Interior's severity during some riots prompted their Secretary, Georghi Dimitrov, to organise a strike which paralysed communications for two months at the end of 1919; the strikers demanded an eight-hour day and better pay and were supported by most Socialists. There were riots and mutinies. In Nova Zagora troops were ordered to shoot the Communist mayor, Lieutenant Kouzman Stoikov; but Stoikov turned his back upon the levelled rifles and went on haranguing his followers—whereupon the troops refused to fire. Eventually, concessions quelled the strike; then Stamboliski conciliated the Communists by reforms and let all-Red villages manage their

own affairs. He saved Bulgaria from Bolshevism.

But Prutkin, formerly a Russian Nihilist, discredited the Agrarian regime at the outset. Arrested during the war for espionage, this fabulous but energetic creature had been befriended by Stamboliski while they were in gaol together; so Stamboliski appointed him chief of the Sofia police! Never had a Nihilist such opportunities! During the great strike he arranged the destruction of a railway bridge, bomb explosions and other outrages, pretexts for fierce measures against the Communists. Then in March 1920 he had bombs placed in a crowded theatre where a White Russian was to lecture. The bombs exploded before anyone of consequence arrived but many people were killed. Prutkin's career ended ingloriously in gaol, though he tried to deflect suspicion before being arrested by arranging attacks upon himself.

At elections in March 1920 the Agrarians gained only 38% of the votes (including the "dowry" of Moslem votes invariably cast for the Government conducting elections); whereupon Stamboliski simply invalidated enough Opposition mandates to secure a majority of two (110 seats) in the Sobranié—a proceeding which, though time-honoured, aroused such indignation that the Inter-Allied Commission threatened Yugoslav intervention.

And now Alexandrov's revolutionaries began to conspire against Stamboliski. In 1914 Alexandrov, Matov and Protogerov had asked him, if the Agrarians eventually gained power, to promise to subsidise IMRO and let it do as it pleased in Macedonia. Stamboliski had declined. Now Alexandrov talked of murdering him.

When the War ended the military made over many arms to revolutionaries at Kustendil, Nevrokop and Petritch. Then Chaoulev went through Albania to reorganise IMRO in western Macedonia. Protogerov began propaganda in Sofia, finding ready support among those numerous dispossessed officials who had served in Macedonia during the occupation. A meeting at the University nominated a committee under Georghi PopChristov who called a congress of Bulgarophile delegates; they elected a fresh (temporary) "National Committee" under Ivan Karandjoulov (with Doctors Alexander Stanichev, Nikola Stoyanov and Georghi Bajdarov among its members); it petitioned the Entente Powers for Macedonia's union with Bulgaria—if not all, then eastern Macedonia to the Vardar.

But in March 1919 the surviving Federalists in Sofia, indignant at this Supremist readiness to split Macedonia further in Bulgaria's interest and revolted by Supremist cruelties during the War, appealed to the immigrants to oppose Supremist aims. All the most celebrated voivodi of pre-War days assembled to form a committee under Georché Petrov, with Hadji Dimov and Lozantchev among its members; it appealed to the Peace Conference for Macedonian unity and autonomy; but this appeal was thought to be a Bulgarian manoeuvre. Thereupon the Federalists began propaganda to explain their aims. Provided Macedonia might manage her own internal affairs she would belong to a Yugoslav Federation; but she would resist denationalisation by Serb chauvinists as she had resisted Bulgarisation, nor would she accept Greek (non-Slav) rule. But early in 1920 this Committee split, one wing under Dimov joining the Communists (with an organ *Osvoboshdenia*) and standing for a Balkan Communist Federation; whereas the others, under Petrov, joined the Agrarian Union.

In November 1919 Stamboliski arrested all Ministers of Radoslavov's Cabinet (which had driven Bulgaria into war), also 1,662 Supremist officers and Macedonians accused by the Yugoslav authorities of responsibility for outrages in South Serbia: though he declined to hand them over for trial by Yugoslav courts (and eventually the Yugoslavs waived this demand). Among those arrested (in Sofia) were Protogerov and Alexandrov.

A couple of days after arrest Alexandrov bribed his warder's wife to carry a note telling his friend Slavi Ivanov to rescue him on his way back from interrogation by the prosecutor; he would contrive to delay his return to gaol until dark: then persuade his escort to let him visit his sick sister, with whom his rescuers must wait. Ivanov promised to do as he asked and sent him a revolver in a loaf of bread. All went as planned. Alexandrov's two escorting police put their rifles against a wall and sat down: whereupon Ivanov, Stoyan Mischev and Vané Arzov sprang into the room, disarmed them, then slipped away with Alexandrov to a friend's home. For seven months Alexandrov hid in Sofia, moving from house to house, at first wondering what to do with himself. The falsified elections gave him his chance. Opposition politicians and military chiefs began plotting; they invited Alexandrov to their homes, promising him

money to re-form IMRO if he would help them overthrow Stamboliski.

Protogerov was rescued too. He was in hospital. Two friends disguised as police called "to take him before the prosecutor". He was ready, for Doctor Athanassov who attended him had warned him. Once outside, a car whisked him away to join Alexandrov. Not long afterwards he left Bulgaria (with an Italian passport) to raise funds; he met Italians and Hungarians, sounded German military circles, even approached Soviet Russia.

They were oddly assorted friends, Alexandrov and Protogerov—the one a Sergeant, the other a General. Ivanov, who eventually left Alexandrov because the latter tried to murder him and now lives in Belgrade, wrote that though Alexandrov had personality, energy and ability, this tall, frigid extremist used these qualities unscrupulously to make himself Macedonian dictator, falsely accusing and then murdering all who criticised him. But Protogerov, by reliable accounts, was brave and energetic yet gentle and religious, cheerful and friendly, hating unnecessary bloodshed; in his last years he lived next to the British vice-Consul, with whom he shared a passion for cats. Extremely frugal, he lived very modestly and never married, saying he belonged only to Macedonia.

From among Bulgarised Macedonians and war criminals Alexandrov recruited his revolutionaries, their numbers being swelled by fugitives from Yugoslav authority. Before the end of 1922 there came from Kratovo (the only district beyond the border where Alexandrov gained a real foothold) 157 fugitives, of whom eighty-three were classed by the Yugoslavs as deserters: twenty-three murderers: twenty agitators: and seventeen accomplices of Alexandrov's bands. In Bulgaria these men were flattered and fêted and given money or jobs while "resting" after raids; they knew South Serbia, spoke the dialect, bore the Yugoslavs a grudge.

A plan to help Turkey resist the cession of Thrace to Greece having fallen through, Alexandrov crossed the frontier near Kustendil with Ivanov and others in July 1920 to organise eastern Macedonia. Half a dozen voivodi (among them Brlio) had been raiding and robbing Vlach shepherds here to keep themselves alive, bad propaganda which Alexandrov stopped; but he found Petrov's Federalists strong in Kustendil, and in Kratovo district—where the people were against revolutionary activities. Therefore Dontcho Anghe-

lov (voivode of Kratovo) urged a congress to plan new methods; but Alexandrov had other ideas.

Until the late autumn Alexandrov roamed eastern Macedonia, cleverly pandering to local sentiment—in one place talking of union with Bulgaria, in another of autonomy, in another using Communist emblems: in fact wearing any mantle that gave him authority. He organised couriers: appointed local voivodi to denounce people daring to be friendly with the Yugoslav authorities. There were always discontented men to rope into his service for Yugoslav misgovernment, brutality and corruption in the first years after the War bred discontent; while the people were so afraid the Bulgarians would return (the Yugoslav police being still weak) and so much feared Alexandrov's men that they often did their bidding for safety's sake, supplying food to bands, paying taxes, and not venturing to complain to the authorities for fear of the death and destruction with which the bands threatened them. Often these threats were carried out, houses being burnt and men murdered with increasing frequency. The Yugoslavs put a price of 250,000 dinars upon Alexandrov's head, but he was strongly guarded and none dared betray him. In the winter he returned to hide and conspire in Sofia and Kustendil, though pretending he was still in Macedonia.

In October 1920 an immigrants' congress in Sofia elected a regular National Committee under Karandjoulov; he urged collaboration with the Croats, Montenegrin rebels, Albanian bands, Communists and all others resisting Yugoslav unification, and announced the formation of an association in Rome working for Macedonian independence. But this talk of Macedonian independence at Italy's behest was a manoeuvre to rally the Federalists behind the old Supremist idea of autonomy as a step to union with Bulgaria—Karandjoulov had once told the British Military Attaché he would sooner "cut his arteries" than petition for Macedonian autonomy. Karandjoulov's talk and Alexandrov's subtleties while he gained strength soon aroused Federalist suspicions.

So in April 1921 Georché Petrov, Christo Tatartchev, Nikola Milev, Philip Athanassov and other Federalists called in Sofia a meeting at which all Macedonia's races were represented. A Federalist National Committee in opposition to Karandjoulov's was elected under Architect Youroukov, having as its aim an autonomous Macedonia within

(ultimately) a South Slav Federation. Then a Federalist IMRO following Deltchev's precepts was formed under Athanassov, Panitza and Chudomir Kantardjiev. Athanassov, known in Vienna for his medical skill, had belonged to IMRO Central Committee with Gruev; Panitza (already introduced) had served the Bulgarians as Intelligence Officer during the War; Kantardjiev was one of those who had condemned Sarafov and Garvanov to death. Athanassov eventually left Panitza and Slavi Ivanov to direct Federalist operations from Bulgaria, going himself to establish a base in Albania since Alexandrov was already strong in eastern Macedonia; moreover he hoped to disprove that the Federalists worked at Sofia's order and to gain Albanian and Italian support. Meanwhile Doctor Grekov at Geneva began to publish a paper contesting the fable that the Macedonians are Bulgarians; repudiating the false tale that the Federalists were Communists: renouncing Macedonian independence: advocating autonomy within either a South Slav or Balkan Federation.

Alexandrov immediately decided that Petrov must die. He spread the rumour that Petrov had conspired with the Agrarian War Minister Dimitrov to murder his supporters and had actually killed two of them (whom Alexandrov seems to have had killed himself); then on July 15 he left Bulgaria.

Petrov spent the next evening in a Sofia café with Chaoulev (who was turning Federalist). An assassin followed him afterwards and shot him on his doorstep, then hid at Alexandrov's house. But when the assassin saw newspapers full of praise for his victim (whose funeral Stamboliski attended) he told Alexandrov's wife he regretted what he had done. Fearing he might tell by whose orders he had acted, she sent a message to her husband who promptly had the assassin murdered. This was a very usual precaution—but the public supposed assassins were killed by their victims' friends! Protogerov, hiding in Sofia, sent a message to the authorities that if Alexandrov had ordered Petrov's death he (Protogerov) would have nothing more to do with him; whereupon disputes began between the two leaders.

Ignoring the protests of his colleagues upon the Central Committee Alexandrov now began murdering Petrov's friends and Stamboliski's supporters. He called Anghelov to a house in Kratovo to discuss the congress Anghelov wanted. They talked. Then Alexandrov called for water—

the prearranged signal. Brlio rushed in with some men: Anghelov and his followers were overpowered. As they were being led out to execution Alexandrov called sardonically: "Now you will have your congress." That was the first of a succession of murders, the resumption of the struggle between Federalists and Supremists. Whether Alexandrov had a hand in the assassination of the Supremists' opponent, the ex-Minister Mihail Takev, in January 1920, was never revealed because Takev's assassin was shot before the enquiry, having stabbed a warder when trying to escape; but Alexandrov did order the murder of Stamboliski's War Minister, Alexander Dimitrov: he was shot at his home near Kustendil, with two escorting police, on October 22, 1921. Dimitrov, Stamboliski's most able lieutenant, had lately visited Belgrade to negotiate an understanding, whereupon the story spread that he had "sold Bulgaria to Pasitch". Dimitrov's murderers were Pancho Mihailov and Brlio. Pancho had lately bolted to join Alexandrov with a large sum of money from the Pernik coalmine, where he had been cashier. These outrages and Alexandrov's activities beyond the border (which called forth Yugoslav remonstrances) caused Stamboliski's Government to take measures against comitadji bands. Several were caught and disarmed. Karandjoulov protested.

Reaching Tirana, Athanassov and his voivodi were surprised to hear from the Italian Minister Castoldi that Protogerov, Chaoulev and PopChristov had arrived in Albania before them—sent by Alexandrov, it transpired, to watch Athanassov. Castoldi told Athanassov he must collaborate with Protogerov, saying there was no time for feuds within the revolutionary organisation. Athanassov answered that collaboration was impossible. Two days later the Prime and Foreign Minister, Pandelev Evangheli, told Athanassov that unless he agreed with Protogerov he must leave Albania which could not harbour two antagonistic revolutionary organisations: adding that he had persuaded Protogerov to make concessions, so agreement should be possible. Eventually Athanassov agreed to meet Protogerov. For ten days they negotiated, reaching complete understanding and signing a Protocol (late in November 1921). Their common aim would be a Federal Macedonia upon Swiss lines, with *cantons* ruled by the dominant race in each; thereafter, Macedonia should decide her own destiny—though Athanassov felt sure that only in eastern Macedonia was there

any desire for union with Bulgaria. Telegrams to Sofia told Youroukov and Karandjoulov of this agreement; whereupon they called a joint congress of immigrants' representatives, who approved it by 160 votes to forty.

Next, Athanassov and Protogerov negotiated with the Albanian revolutionary Kossovo Committee, conferring with the War Minister Amet Zogu (now King Zog), the Minister of Interior Bairam Tsurri, Hassan Prishtina and other Albanian leaders: the upshot being a convention whereby, if their joint efforts succeeded, the Kossovo district should be annexed to Albania while Macedonia would be autonomous.

Early in 1922 Athanassov and Protogerov went to Rome. There they met a representative of the Italian Foreign Office who, in the course of discussions, urged them to arrange the assassination of King Alexander: saying this might lead to the disruption of Yugoslavia which was already torn by quarrels between Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and Macedonians. Alexander's death would be the Macedonians' opportunity. Athanassov retorted hotly that the deed would be no good advertisement for the Macedonian cause, adding that surely the Italians could murder him themselves. Next day he and Protogerov left Rome.

Protogerov stayed in Vienna—though he visited Genoa to beg Russian money from Krustu Rakovski (who refused it). Athanassov went back to Sofia in April, finding there a letter from Alexandrov telling him he would "pay with his head" for his activities.

Meanwhile some of Alexandrov's voivodi, sick at his conduct, had urged Ivanov to sound Protogerov. At Vienna Protogerov told Ivanov he could no longer work with Alexandrov whose self-willed ways were intolerable; but when he heard Alexandrov repudiated the Tirana Protocol (which annoyed the Supremists) he repudiated it too, rather than quarrel with his colleague.

Alexandrov, supported by the Bulgarian Right Press, soon broke up the Supremist-Federalist *entente*, there being an epidemic of murders and outrages during 1922: some of them ordered by Alexandrov against the Federalists, others possibly not his work but intended to discredit the Government—to which they were attributed by rumour-mongers! In March unknown persons threw a bomb into the American Legation but nobody was there to be killed. In May Doctor Grekov (editor of *Slovo* and former Chargé d'Affaires in

Switzerland) was shot in Sofia by unknown assassins, clearly for his Federalist sympathies. One night in July Sofia's electricity failed, then two police chiefs who were hot upon the trail of Grekov's murderers were shot down. Several Ministers were shot at, in one case the assassins firing at the wrong car and killing an innocent woman. There were other outrages—some retaliatory perhaps. Then in September Ivanov was wounded in a Sofia street by an Alexandrovist assassin. But the Federalists gained the upper hand at Kustendil (hitherto Alexandrov's base), Doupnitza and Gorna Djoumaia.

The Federalist voivode Kroum Zographov had gone with a large band to make propaganda in eastern Macedonia. Alexandrov called him a brigand: told him to go back: sent men against him whom he routed; then (in May 1922) Alexandrov ordered a peasant to betray Zographov's band to Yugoslav gendarmerie. Zographov, wounded, committed suicide: his men fled back to Bulgaria. Ivanov led eight men to investigate Zographov's death, executed three peasants who had betrayed him and burnt ten houses in their village.

Both factions' bands now frequently clashed with Yugoslav troops or gendarmerie. A Federalist band under Grigor Tsiklev lost nine killed during a heroic action in Kratovo, one of half a dozen fights in the early summer of 1922; then barracks were sniped, mails raided, the sub-prefect of Berovo and his family massacred, a gendarmerie captain and six men wiped out by Brlio—and so on. Whereupon martial law was proclaimed in South Serbia, Bulgaria warned, Greece and Roumania (which had been raided too) asked by Yugoslavia to collaborate in punitive measures. Tsar Boris was alarmed; but Stamboliski told him that if there was an invasion he would resign and direct the peasants' resistance: then the Tsar should put a price on his head to pretend this resistance unauthorised, and appeal to the League of Nations! However, Stamboliski's Minister in Belgrade, Kosta Todorov, himself a veteran comitadji, had already proposed joint frontier control: a proposal which led eventually to the Nish Convention.

Meanwhile Petritch Department was dominated by Aleko Vassilev (a former follower of Sandanski) whose comfortable proportions had brought him the nickname "Pasha". After the War Aleko did good business in contraband; but one day he killed the Agrarian District Governor and Police Commandant who were maltreating the peasants; then he

retired to the Pirin Mountains, rallied Sandanski's surviving adherents, made terms with local Supremists, established his sway over the district with the connivance of local military authorities and profiteering tobacco merchants who disliked the Agrarian regime, then made several raids into Greece and South Serbia.

When Alexandrov lost Kustendil to the Federalists he went to confer with Aleko, taking with him Colonel Georghi Athanassov (henceforward, to avoid confusion, called Colonel A) who stayed with Aleko as secretary and liaison officer. Known for his ferocity during the War, Colonel A had further distinguished himself one day in January 1922 by quarrelling with and then shooting the Prefects of Sofia and Petritch and another Agrarian in a Sofia café; then he fled to Alexandrov, who welcomed this intrepid killer but was soon jealous of his superior military knowledge.

How Alexandrov agreed with Aleko is not clear, though it seems he promised to adopt the Federalist cause once he had reunited IMRO under his own leadership—for Alexandrov's passion was for power. Their bond was hatred of the Agrarians who would not countenance their revolutionary activities; but Aleko distrusted Alexandrov—"sooner or later he will betray us," he remarked.

But the former Sandanists of Nevrokop, friends of the Agrarians and led by Panitza, declined to join this uneasy concubinage and threw Aleko's agents out of town. So one rainy night in November 1922 Aleko and Colonel A descended upon Nevrokop with strong bands, while the (sympathetic) garrison turned out to "preserve order". With 50 men Panitza resisted, but in vain, eventually escaping by a miracle. The invaders shot 15 opponents, burnt the Agrarian Club, school and a dozen shops, then made themselves at home; they now controlled all Petritch Department except Razlog, which managed to defy them. Later, Panitza, with Stoyan Mischev, Mito Sokolarski, Grigor Tsiklev and other celebrated voivodi, tried to recover Nevrokop; but they were driven into Greece and eventually (when Stamboliski agreed to collaborate with the Yugoslavs against Alexandrov) became leaders of the militia organised by the Yugoslav authorities to repel raiders from Bulgaria.

Alexandrov next recovered Kustendil. Hearing of some secret understanding between Alexandrov and the War Minister Tomov (who was plotting against Stamboliski), the Federalists withdrew. Then on December 6 Pancho

Mihailov and Brlio marched in with a thousand well-disciplined men from Petritch and Kratovo, put machine-guns at strategic points, executed half a dozen Federalist sympathisers and burnt their houses, while the few troops in the town remained benevolently neutral.

The rumour spread in Sofia that Alexandrov's men would now lead a revolt against the Government. In Stamboliski's absence abroad the Cabinet ordered the War Minister to lead troops to Kustendil: while certain officials, doubting the Army's loyalty, mobilised 10,000 Orange Guards (Agrarian volunteers armed mostly with sticks) of whom several thousands were called to Sofia. Arriving outside Kustendil the War Minister ordered the revolutionaries to leave; whereupon Pancho Mihailov and Brlio, strongly escorted, marched up to him to demand that officials friendly towards Alexandrov should be appointed in Petritch Department and the Federalists no longer tolerated in Sofia—otherwise they would invade the capital. Then they withdrew from Kustendil, the troops firing shots after them for appearances' sake.

After this triumph Alexandrov and Aleko were supreme in south-western Bulgaria: nor could the Government shake their power because local officials were in league with them and the military authorities helped them. They levied taxes, murdered officials, enrolled all men of military age and soon disposed of 8,000 militia: though they were short of arms.

Alexandrov's audacity had been stimulated by Stamboliski's negotiations with Belgrade and the political parties' now frantic agitation against the Agrarian regime. Until March 1922 a censorship had muzzled the Opposition. Thereafter there had been inflammatory speeches and outrages. "We must annihilate the Agrarian criminals," roared Athanas Bourov. "Fascism is an historic necessity," declared Todor Todorov. In April the Government had learnt of a conspiracy among the 17,000 refugee White Russian troops of General Wrangel's Army who had been installed in empty barracks up and down the country. Since the Bulgarian Army was weak and of uncertain loyalty, the Government promptly disarmed these Russians and deported twenty of their senior officers for plotting with foreign agents. The indignant Russians became more angry when their General Pokrovski, trying to cross the frontier illegally, fired at a Bulgarian sentry who promptly bayoneted him.

Matters came to a head when the Opposition, under Bourov's leadership, planned mass meetings, the first at Trnovo on September 17, 1922. Local Agrarians organised a counter-meeting. Before going abroad Stamboliski said both meetings should be banned, but the Minister of Interior Raiko Daskalov decided it would cause less trouble to allow them. Ten party leaders started for Trnovo in a special train drawing Daskalov's coach. Opposition partisans jeered at "the Vladaia hero", whereupon the Agrarians became wild. At Dolni Dubnik the train was held up, the Opposition leaders dragged out and their beards shaved off—a primitive insult. They were in imminent danger of being lynched. Daskalov saved their lives only by promising the mob they should be tried for war guilt though pleading against impromptu justice; they were arrested in a police station until they could be released with safety. Bourov was at Orehovitza with 4,000 partisans bent upon holding their meeting, and there was serious skirmishing with Agrarian mobs before his following disbanded. Bourov was outlawed. Meantime a train was looted at Dragoman and an attempt made to hold up the Orient Express. Indeed it seemed that the Government could not keep order.

To redeem Daskalov's pledges all Ministers of the Guechov-Danev and Malinov-Kostourkov Cabinets were soon interned at Shumen. The Radoslavovists were already on trial; they were condemned in March 1923 to lifelong imprisonment (*Radoslavov in contumaciam*): while General Jekov was sent to gaol for ten years. The Guechov-Danev Cabinet's responsibilities had been exposed by a Parliamentary Commission in 1914, while the Malinov-Kostourkov Cabinet had opposed Daskalov's mutineers in 1918. By a referendum to ratify the Government's action, two-thirds of the country voted for these politicians' trial.

Then there had happened the Kustendil affair. The undisciplined Orange Guards called to Sofia got completely out of hand, pillaging and robbing, burning the Radical Club, sniping at Opposition leaders' houses, dancing about the streets and filling the hospitals with battered civilians. At last they were shepherded into barracks and sent home. The Government began to organise them as a partisan militia.

Alexandrov had condemned several Ministers to death and shots had been fired at them. On December 16 a bomb was thrown at Raiko Daskalov as he left the Sobranié. He

was unhurt; but a hundred suspects were arrested, Orange Guards threatened to march on Sofia.

On February 4 came the next sensation. Stamboliski, with five other Ministers, was in the ministerial box at the National Theatre for an anniversary performance. Opposite them sat Tsar Boris and his sisters. Suddenly something hard, thrown from below, fell upon an empty chair beside Stamboliski. He knocked it off—then dashed for the door with his companions, just in time. There was a shattering explosion. There was pandemonium. Assen Daskalov (no relative of Minister Daskalov), Alexandrov's hireling, had stood up among the audience to throw the bomb; then he blazed off his revolver to cause panic: and in the panic he got away. The Tsar remained with his sisters in their seats, exhorting the people to calm and afterwards congratulating the Ministers upon their escape. The performance continued. The terrorist, who was said to have been in touch with an Italian bank, was never caught: though it afterwards transpired that he had thrown the bomb at his namesake too. It is characteristic of Bulgarian political propaganda, however, that at the time the Agrarians themselves were said to have arranged these outrages as a pretext for severity against their opponents!

Six nights later a fire gutted the National Theatre (and the present splendid building ultimately rose in its place). All the police were rushed to extinguish the flames—which were a signal for revolt within the Government. The Ministers Tomov, Torlakov and Manolov, men of moderate views who had quarrelled with Daskalov and disapproved Stamboliski's arbitrary dissolution of the Sobranié, had just been expelled from the Agrarian Union for alleged corruption and disloyalty; this very evening Stamboliski had reformed his Cabinet without them, dropping Daskalov too and appointing him Minister in Prague. To replace Tomov Stamboliski, who was short of good men, chose his charming young nephew Konstantin Mouraviev, who soon won much sympathy in the Army by his hard work in its interest—though he was too young at twenty-nine perhaps (and only a subaltern) to control it. But to-night Tomov still held the War Office; his Chief of Staff, General Topaldjikov, arranged for a lamp to be set so that it would ignite the theatre curtain. But his signal was not acted upon. Radolov (one of Stamboliski's Ministers) gives two versions of that plot, which he heard from the chief actors while all were in gaol

together in 1925. Tomov told him Topaldjikov came to say: "All is ready for a *coup d'état*. At your order we will overthrow the Government." To which Tomov said he answered: "I am still War Minister and shall remain at my post. Tell the Prime Minister what you have told me." But Topaldjikov's version rings truer. He said Tomov asked: "Does the Tsar agree?" Topaldjikov said he did not know; whereat Tomov ordered him to ask the Tsar; but the Tsar refused to agree, so nothing happened. Later that evening Stamboliski was called urgently to the Palace. Afterwards he said Tomov and Topaldjikov should be hanged. Did Tsar Boris denounce them for Stamboliski's sake, or because he preferred Stamboliski to Tomov while other plans matured?

The new Cabinet changed the electoral system from the majority to the proportional, then gained 212 seats at elections on April 22; whereas the Communists got 16 and other parties only 17 between them! So Stamboliski became virtual Dictator. He let it be known that the Constitution would be changed to deprive "the little Tsar" of his dictatorial prerogatives, news which provoked a rumour that a Republic would be proclaimed. While there is no evidence that this was Stamboliski's intention there were some grounds for the supposition, which caused genuine alarm in some perfectly honest circles.

These happenings added fuel to the impotent Opposition's flames, even the Communists and dissident Agrarian followers of the austere Draghiev joining the general clamour against Stamboliski. If Stamboliski's Government had been better than its predecessors its high-handed measures might be justified in a country where 80% of the people are peasants—whom no later Government has represented; but (wrote Radolov) his Party was undisciplined, corruption rife, criticism not tolerated, Agrarian partisans scrambled for positions and any Agrarian hooligan was preferred to members of other Parties, so official posts were filled by uncouth and ignorant peasants. Even the Socialist leader Pastoukhov declared: "With the Devil I can be friends—but the Agrarian Government must be destroyed."

"So you are the Colonel Volkov who wants to overthrow me!" Stamboliski had exclaimed amiably when that officer was introduced to him at the Sofia Military Club on January 15, 1923. Head of the Topographical Institute,

Volkov was leader of the resuscitated Officers' League and had fallen under suspicion. He had planned a coup for January 21, but Stamboliski thwarted it gently by this hint that he knew all.

The Officers' League (of serving officers) had been reformed after the War to preserve discipline and resist Communism; thus it attracted the best officers, whom it strove to keep upon the active list when the Army was reduced. This was no League of aristocracy (for all Bulgarians are of humble origin a couple of generations back) but a body uniting men of all political shades against partisan interference with professional matters. Among them were fanatical Supremists, Germanophiles, Italophiles, Franco-philés who hated Italy and urged *entente* with Yugoslavia, sympathisers with Alexandrov and enemies too—but all combined against the Agrarians when they seemed unfit to govern. The Agrarians were so tactless towards professional officers, provoking brawls and even an armed demonstration before the War Office, that in 1923 only 10% were outside the League.

When the Army was demobilised the numerous retired (or *Reserve*) officers felt they had first claim to Government appointments and were sore when these were filled by mannerless hooligans while they themselves lived in great straits. An Association was formed; and as the Agrarian regime deteriorated the secret society *Kubrat*, affiliated with the Officers' League, came into existence under General Lazarov. It was organised in cells of three (like the Communists), only the senior of each three knowing the senior of two other groups—and so on. Over 2,000 Reserve Officers in Sofia alone belonged to it. There was a similar association of reserve N.C.O.s. Lastly, there were the White Russians, who were distributed about the country for employment but always under their officers; with their Generals, with Lazarov, and with the N.C.O.s, Colonel Volkov conspired.

Among the civilians it was Alexander Tsankov, a moody University professor, who headed the conspiracy against the Agrarians. Born at Orehovo in 1879 and educated in Germany, Tsankov had formerly been a Socialist advocate of Balkan Confederation under Austria-Hungary. Colonel Slaveiko Vassilev, while Director-General at the War Office in October 1920, had agreed with Professors Tsankov and Michaikov that the Agrarian regime should be overthrown

—but the party leaders were not convinced until after the Dolni Dubnik outrage.

When it was known that Stamboliski had agreed with Yugoslavia upon joint action against bands, Alexandrov planned to wreck that agreement by provoking the Yugoslavs to reprisals which would cause anger in Bulgaria. Accordingly, one January night, Brlio's band descended upon Kadrifakovo village where Bosnian immigrants had been settled, put it to flames, bayoneted seventeen settlers (among them six women, two lads under fourteen and an infant), then retired before troops arrived. That was not the first massacre, nor the last. In April another band attacked Serbian settlers at Dolani, killing the sub-Prefect and seven gendarmes. Troops, pursuing them to Garvan village which notoriously harboured Alexandrov's men, were fired upon; whereupon the village was shelled and twenty-eight persons shot down. Such was the Yugoslav account. But a lurid pamphlet (*Le Calvaire de Garvan*) published in Sofia told a different tale. Garvan had been burnt in 1913 for helping the Bulgarians and in 1914 seven villagers executed for the same reason; but now it was innocent! Yet troops under the Prefect, Dobritza Matkovitch, had seized twenty-six "innocent" men and two lads whom Matkovitch ordered the troops to shoot; but the troops refused, whereupon Matkovitch had machine-gunned the lot himself.

This story (Sofia's version) served for a wild agitation throughout Bulgaria, 40,000 immigrants demonstrating in Sofia with black-draped banners and inflammatory speeches, all agreement with Yugoslavia being denounced and Macedonian autonomy (now the Supremist refrain again) demanded. Meanwhile there were skirmishes upon the frontier, Yugoslav patrols were sniped in their bivouacks, Bulgarophile Macedonian villagers shut up their dogs at night so that they would not betray prowlers. Nearly 200 suspects were arrested and two old voivodi executed by the Yugoslavs.

Early in March Bulgarian delegates had gone to negotiate with Yugoslavs at Nish and on May 12 the Nish Convention came into force. Accepting the fact that revolutionaries harrying South Serbia were no rebels (as Supremists pretended) but desperadoes from Bulgaria, this Convention provided for vigorous concerted measures by Bulgarian and Yugoslav frontier authorities to prevent raids. All trees, brushwood and tall crops would be cleared for a hundred

yards on either side of the frontier; but peasants on one side owning properties on the other should have passes to cross, though these properties should be exchanged as soon as possible. Notorious supporters of the revolutionaries should be banished from the frontier zones, active revolutionaries extradited; but the Yugoslavs declined to amnesty political fugitives to Bulgaria until revolutionary activities ceased (which is partly why they continued).

On March 17 martial law had been proclaimed in Petritch Department; whereupon Alexandrov declared the Department autonomous, threatened death to all opponents, then sent assassins to Sofia under a reserve subaltern to murder the Ministers; but the subaltern was cornered and committed suicide, leaving papers which revealed his mission. In May the Bulgarian Government ordered the arrest of all Alexandrov's revolutionaries and the suppression of all organisations or newspapers supporting them, while warning the revolutionaries and their families of bloody vengeance if any outrages against Agrarian leaders were attempted. House to house searches began in Sofia, suspects were arrested wholesale, Macedonian immigrant leaders connected with Alexandrov were interned, all Agrarian deputies armed; then 20,000 Orange Guard infantry and cavalry already equipped, and 200,000 not yet armed, were ordered to prepare for concentration upon Sofia: while loyal forces were sent into Petritch Department—but not enough; these ill-trained Orange Guards were chased out of several villages by Alexandrov's men, who were covertly supported by garrison troops under conspiring officers.

In January Stamboliski had ordered the Chief of Staff (Topaldjikov) and Sofia Garrison Commander (Litchev) to disperse the Officers' League's leaders among provincial garrisons. This order had been incompletely executed and Volkov stayed in Sofia. Fresh plots were hatched in the Sofia and Sliven garrisons independently and the two groups' agents met by hazard at Gorna Djoumaia; they combined—under Volkov and Lazarov again—while Tsankov directed political preparations.

It was on April 24 that Tsankov first sounded the bearded little Socialist journalist Dimo Kazazov, under pledge of secrecy. Only by conspiracy, Tsankov told him, could Stamboliski be overthrown because the Constitution was inoperative and the Tsar inactive. Though Kazazov had written furiously against the Agrarians (and was now learning shoe-

making in case his paper was suppressed) he hesitated a fortnight before joining the conspirators. Then Tsankov gave him details.

There were two independent sections, the political and the technical, in contact through Tsankov. The politicians were Stoyentchev (Democrat), Svetan Boboshevski and Professor Yanaki Mollov (of the Popular Party), Boyan Smilov (Liberal), and Petar Todorov (Radical). Ivan Volkov—a quiet but intelligent man, said Tsankov—headed the technical section, assisted by *reserve* officers—Generals Lazarov and Roussev, Colonels Kalfov, Nikola Ratchev, Kimon Georghiev and Damian Veltchev.

Georghiev and Veltchev had small parts now; they made history later. Georghiev, at this time a deputy, is a quiet and scholarly man with a disconcerting glass eye but winning smile. Veltchev, borne by a small merchant's wife at Gabrovo in 1883, combines executive ability with lofty idealism—a chivalrous, silent man of action, erect, square-jawed, with deep-set eyes gentle in repose yet flaming at injustice. Having distinguished himself during the War he retired, spent a holiday in France, then found employment in a Sofia bank while studying history and law. His enemies (who benefited most by Stamboliski's downfall) have exaggerated his purely executive role in 1923; whereas the Agrarians do not mention him in their books of diatribes against the leaders of this coup. But Volkov knew his capabilities and sent him with the others up and down Bulgaria to make plans with garrison commanders and White Russians.

In May Volkov sent Ratchev to ask Alexandrov's help, urging him not to provoke the Agrarians more before the coup. Alexandrov said he could spare few men but would smuggle 200 into Sofia by mid-July; adding the coup should be then, while the peasants were harvesting. This unsatisfactory reply decided the conspirators to dispense with Alexandrov's help, some being against aid from revolutionaries and all agreeing that Agrarian leaders' lives must be spared; but upon this Volkov had privy ideas; he planned to form a Fascist mafia under his control, which should crush all who were not of his persuasion and keep them crushed.

Late in 1922 Alexandrov had appointed his secretary, Ivan Mihailov (Gavrilov), to be his "Point Chief" (local commandant) in Sofia. Born at Novo Selo near Shtip in

1896, Mihailov had been to school in Salonika and at the Serbian High School in Skoplje, had been taxation clerk at Shtip during the Bulgarian occupation, then had fled to Sofia with other malefactors. He studied law at Sofia University; but in 1920 Bajdarov had recommended this seemingly modest youth to Alexandrov. Of medium height, with alert blue eyes, boundless ambition and no scruples, Mihailov was a founder-member of the lately-formed Union



DIMO KAZAZOV.

of Macedonian Students. Though this Union's aims were cultural, Mihailov soon gained considerable influence among its members by declaring himself "dedicated to the Macedonian revolution"; he rallied round him a group of young Supremist fanatics, notably Yordan Tchkatrov, Simeon Eftimov, Kyril Drangov, Joro Nastev, Strahil Razvigorov, Vladimir Kourtev and Nikola Kolarov, the "revolutionary heroes" of to-morrow.

Volkov, for his mafia, called together a number of utterly unscrupulous officers upon whom he could rely, chief among them Major Porkov, Captains Kotcho Stoyanov,

Kutzarov, Harlakov, Tochev and Radev; these men, the man's general staff, casting around for executives, turned to the Bulgarised Macedonians and hit upon Mihailov's gang. So there were laid the foundations of a secret police which would become the Hidden Power in Bulgaria. For the coup Mihailov and some of his friends were given officers' uniforms and passes with fictitious names (Mihailov's was Lieutenant Brezov); for some months afterwards they received from secret military funds a substantial subsidy to pay the assassins they recruited, many of these being eventually enrolled in the police through Volkov's influence. Volkov seems to have made secret arrangements too with Colonel A, who sent bands to supplement the assassins when the coup took place and was afterwards sharply reprimanded by Alexandrov for doing so; but Alexandrov himself sent men into Sofia's suburbs to rescue the conspirators if the coup failed.

On May 18 police came to Kazazov's office and (not knowing him) asked: "Where is Kazazov?" "In the provinces," answered Kazazov—silently vowing he would not risk sleeping another night at home; but he dared tell his family nothing. He did not know which of his friends might be in the plot—he dared not ask them.

On June 1 Stamboliski went for a fortnight to his farm at Slavovitza near Pazardjik to prepare changes in the Constitution. On the 7th the Tsar visited him there with a gift of hothouse melons; some say they spent the day happily together, others that high words passed. On the 5th the conspirators had agreed to strike in the small hours of the 9th; the Reserve Officers' Congress, purposely fixed for the 24th, gave a pretext for the comings and goings of their couriers. The Ministers had been warned repeatedly for a month of what was impending, the conspirators' names were known, Stamboliski aware that bands from Petritch Department were ready to attack Slavovitza—he said he knew he would be assassinated. Preparations among Alexandrov's men and in the garrisons were reported by Federalists and by loyal officers; yet the War Minister, Mouraviev, overconfident, was unwilling to act upon hearsay. On the 8th General Litchev urged martial law; but the Minister of Interior thought the arrest of the conspirators that night would suffice, nor changed his opinion though a succession of alarming reports reached him throughout the day. A Federalist told that 240 Macedonians had crossed the fron-

tier for Sofia—he had been with them but had feigned illness. Notorious terrorists were seen in Sofia. The Police Commandant discovered that all his grenades and machine-guns had been removed by his assistant “to be overhauled” in barracks. A man told Obbov his wife had dreamed there would be a coup that night; Obbov, realising the man spoke of a dream because he feared for his safety afterwards if he made an official statement, warned his colleagues: but he was snubbed; so he took a train to Plevna, where his friends were strongest. Criminal negligence, wrote Radolov, was the Government’s undoing.

At nightfall police sought the conspirators in vain. Already they had wished their unsuspecting families good night and crept apprehensively to General Roussev’s house near the G.P.O. It was 10 p.m. All were there except Lazarov and Veltchev. Volkov had appointed Lazarov to command the Garrison and Veltchev the Military College, so both had donned their long-disused uniforms and gone to their posts, serving officers having prepared for them by arresting their predecessors. While the Sobranié still sat the G.P.O. had been seized from within and telephones stopped; but deputies supposed this a break-down and went calmly to bed.

The conspirators were nervous. An important Agrarian official lodged in Roussev’s house. Perhaps his presence averted suspicion. He was asleep in the next room. They must not wake him. In hushed voices they formed their cabinet—Tsankov, Prime Minister and Education: Roussev, Interior: Todorov, Finance: Mollov, Agriculture: Smilov, Justice: Kazazov, Communications: Boboshevski, Commerce: Stoyentchev, National Economy. For Foreign Affairs all favoured Nikola Milev but decided his connection with the revolutionaries might offend the Yugoslavs; so Kalfov took Foreign Affairs. Volkov would be War Minister—if the Tsar agreed, he stipulated. Ratchev and Georgiev acted as secretaries—they prepared a *ukase* proclaiming the new Government.

Would the signal never come? They pressed their noses to the window, watching. All was still. Suddenly the electric street lamps went up—then out again. At last! It was 3 a.m. Lazarov’s troops and Veltchev’s cadets would be moving now to seize strategic points and police stations and arrest the Ministers; Lazarov’s reserve officers would be emerging from their houses to police the streets. Shots

round the G.P.O.! A short burst of machine-gun fire farther away! Silence again. It was 4 a.m. Then there were brisk steps outside. The door opened. Colonel Veltchev entered, saluted, and reported to Volkov that the capital was in their hands. Only one police station had tried to resist: and one policeman, unfortunately, had been killed before the G.P.O.—the only casualty. Most police and sentries had not thought of disobeying officers in uniform.

Then came Lazarov from the War Office. All was over. But never again must the Army take such action. Stamboliski had wanted a partisan Army—but the Army must keep clear of politics. Now it must withdraw to barracks and leave everything to the Cabinet. They all heartily agreed.

Most Agrarian deputies had been herded into barracks where some wag fired a machine-gun over their heads to cow them. The Ministers had been arrested too—except Stamboliski, Obbov and Douparinov (who was caught while trying to escape to Turkey). Mouraviev, on his way home, had come upon soldiers at unexpected places. Anxiously he had sat up, fearing the worst, contemplating suicide. Seeing the electric light signal he resolved to go to a regiment which, he was sure, was loyal. Dropping from his window into his garden he found himself staring into rifle muzzles. Minister Nedelko Athanassov was confined at a police station where some of Mihailov's assassins had made themselves at home. He called for water. "Why waste water?" cried several voices. "In a few minutes we'll be drinking your blood!" There was a furious exclamation from the door. "What did I hear? Do you think we are making this coup so that you may murder your enemies? No blood shall be shed! Leave here at once!" It was Veltchev (whom Athanassov did not know). Athanassov told me this tale himself.

Indeed Veltchev, who had planned the seizure of Sofia, had taken every precaution to prevent bloodshed and nobody but one policeman was killed that night. But Mihailov's uniform was his pass; he contrived to have several Federalists arrested, his friends searched their houses. Alexandrov and his men were not in Sofia that night however—the military would not let them in.

Escorted by Guards Cavalry in scarlet uniforms, Tsankov, Smilov and Kazazov drove with Colonels Alexander Tsanev and Vassil Karakoulakov to Vrania Palace (outside Sofia) to obtain the Tsar's signature to the *ukase*. At the door the

German Chamberlain was summoned. He came—very scared. Tsanev peremptorily ordered him to tell the Tsar the Prime Minister of Bulgaria wished to see him at once. The Chamberlain protested that the Tsar slept—but finally he went. Half an hour elapsed. Tsankov and Tsanev became impatient. Then the Chamberlain came again to say the Tsar was nowhere to be found—he must have gone shooting.

Tsanev pushed past the stammering Chamberlain, leading the others upstairs. He flung into the Tsar's bedroom and felt the bed. It was still warm! So the Tsar had only just gone out!

What should they do? They sent soldiers and servants to hunt for the Tsar. They stamped up and down upon the gravel before the door. They would wait till 11 a.m. If the Tsar had not appeared then, said Tsankov, they would return to Sofia and proclaim a Republic. Kazazov was delighted—he had always dreamed of a Republic. At last a servant came running to say Princess Nadejda had been found. She came—in riding kit, and nervously asked them in.

"We have waited four hours to see your brother," said Tsankov abruptly, "but he went out after we arrived. A few minutes more and we shall return to Sofia, declining all responsibility for misfortunes to the Dynasty. We don't want difficulties, but if your august brother makes them we shall overcome them effectively. The responsibility will be his, not ours."

The Princess said the Tsar knew nothing. He had gone shooting. She went to find him.

Soon he came. Tsankov told what had happened. He replied that he was no longer Tsar—his prerogatives were violated, he had not been consulted. He had gone out to ponder, he admitted. He could not take sides; and since the Constitution had been set aside he had no functions to fulfil.

Tsankov answered that he was Tsar and must remain Tsar; but action had been necessary to avert civil war. Still the Tsar demurred. Finally Tsankov spoke harshly.

"Will you go with the People and Army or against them? . . . The die is cast. We shall fulfil our purpose and duty with or without you. The Dynasty must take the consequences."

There was silence. The Tsar looked from one to another.

Then Tsankov drew the *ukase* from his pocket and laid it before the Tsar. He signed—remarking: “Take measures to save lives—there must be no bloodshed.”

Such is Kazazov’s account. But is it true? Or was there play-acting? Most Agrarians are sure the Tsar had approved the conspiracy beforehand, though they offer no reliable evidence.

When Tsankov returned to Sofia the military withdrew to barracks; and the Officers’ League, now under Lazarov’s presidency, retired with it. For five years Veltchev withdrew from the political scene, commanding the Military College with unprecedented opposition to nepotism, yet winning the cadets’ devotion by his personality; but he could no more control events which followed than could hundreds of other Colonels. The Cabinet now controlled the country; but the War Minister, Volkov (promoted General) soon controlled the Cabinet. The coup, he boasted, “was decided upon by me. It was planned and carried out by the military and national leaders under my command”; and without his military power the Cabinet could not stand. His ruthlessness soon earned for him the name “Butcher”.

When the military withdrew to barracks Alexandrov arrived in Sofia. That night Volkov’s mafia and Mihailov’s gangsters removed in military cars and the notorious “Death Lorries” those political opponents and privy enemies still detained in barracks and police stations, and butchered them outside the town. Among them were the mayor and several officers. Razmov, president of the Socialist Party’s Sofia branch, was kidnapped in a street; whereupon Kazazov (a Socialist too) determined to secure Razmov’s release and stop these murders. Reluctantly he sought Alexandrov. They walked up and down a street by the Catholic Church together—Minister and “illegal” terrorist—arguing: until at last Alexandrov promised the murders would stop, though he added that Razmov was already dead.

Bands under Brlio and others prowled through northern Bulgaria the while, murdering designated Agrarian leaders. Stoyan Filipov directed terrorism in the south. Panitza escaped from Plovdiv by dodging over roofs and shooting two soldiers. In Petritch Department there was a purge, thirty men being murdered about Nevrokop alone.

Obbov, in Plevna, had called out 6,000 Orange Guards; but they had only 300 rifles. The Plevna garrison and 600 White Russians marched against them with artillery, there

was skirmishing, then the Agrarians dispersed. Obbov fled by the Danube to join Raiko Daskalov and Kosta Todorov who had the luck to be abroad. Obbov was afterwards condemned *in contumaciam* for graft; but when, later, he demanded a fresh trial with full right to defend himself, this was refused. (In 1937 he was "pardoned" by Tsar Boris).



LE ROI BORIS DERNIER

Fils du Roi Ferdinand le Félon.

Organisateur du Coup d'Etat Bulgare du 9 juin 1923

Caricature reproduced from *La Bulgarie Sous la Régime de L'Assassinat*, illustrating the belief of some Agrarians that Tsar Boris secretly connived at the *coup d'état* in June 1923.

At Stanimaka, Radomir and elsewhere there were skirmishes too, but the unarmed masses were inert and the Communists stayed neutral, being indignant at Stamboliski's severity against them.

On the 9th an officer had gone to arrest Stamboliski at Slavovitza but was received with machine-gun fire and withdrew. Stamboliski then rallied 2,000 Orange Guards under reserve officers—though most were unarmed. On the 11th they marched upon Tatar Pazardjik; but during that night Colonel Slaveiko Vassilev led out the Pazardjik garrison and

shelled the Agrarians, who broke. Stamboliski fled with his brother to the mountains; but the next day they were betrayed while getting bread and taken to Vassilev at Pazardjik.

On the 13th Captain Harlakov arrived, bringing—wrote Vassilev—a written “order from Sofia” that he must deliver Stamboliski to the bearer. Harlakov had with him a band in military uniforms, sent by Mihailov and led by Simeon Eftimov and the voivode Velichko Velianov (Skopski), nicknamed “the Uncle”, whose murderous ferocity was notorious in South Serbia. They took Stamboliski to his home at Slavovitza, sticking knives into him as they went. “You cowards!” he called them. At dawn they made him dig a grave. He had hardly done when they chopped off his ears and “the hands that signed the Nish Convention”. He was shot. Then his head was taken in a tin to Sofia—it was never found. Agrarian Union funds in his house were confiscated, his family persecuted, his brother murdered with equal ferocity. Naturally these hideous details are denied; yet the crime was legalised, for nobody was punished and Stamboliski posthumously condemned to death!

BULGARIA AND ADJOINING COUNTRIES

SCALE 1:1,000,000

PRESENT FRONTIER
 BOUNDARY OF 1913 (solid line)
 PROVINCIAL BOUNDARIES
 RAILWAYS: NORMAL GAGE
 RAILWAYS: NARROW GAGE
 FORTIFICATIONS
 PASSES AND DEFILES
 MOUNTAIN PEAKS
 MONASTERIES
 RUINS



CHAPTER VII

THE BUTCHER'S WORK

IF General Volkov had promised to support Alexandrov's Organisation it was because that fitted his rearmament plans; and those plans were Italy's too. Italy had supported Volkov's coup, wrote an Italian Review, "to safeguard interests common to both Bulgarians and Italians"; and Italy had contrived that 45% of Bulgaria's reparations should be payable to her, gaining thus a means to exercise pressure upon Bulgaria.

In April 1920 (and several times afterwards) the Italian Minister in Sofia had proposed to Stamboliski an Italo-Bulgarian alliance against Yugoslavia, but Stamboliski had categorically refused. Italy was irritated by the prospect of a South Slav Entente which would strengthen her Yugoslav rival, eager for an alliance which would threaten Yugoslavia's rear and communications with Salonika. Italy wished Alexandrov's organisation to play again the role of 1915—and Volkov agreed.

With natural military sympathy Volkov immediately began surreptitious rearmament, this causing the Entente Representatives of the Liquidation Board to state in their final report in June 1927 that Bulgaria was evading the military clauses of the Neuilly Treaty and had never annulled the statute enacting compulsory military service. Hence the perpetual youthfulness of Bulgaria's "volunteer" troops. The Officers' League had contrived, during demobilisation, to conceal war material from Entente Representatives. When in September 1922 British and French officers had gone (in uniform) to examine a suspected depot in Plovdiv they were arrested while rumbling military lorries transferred the depot's contents elsewhere, then released next day with profuse apologies for "this mistake". Stamboliski dismissed those concerned—but those military stores were saved from being dumped into the sea. Such war stocks were gradually supplemented from Italy and Germany and

Hungary, supplies being smuggled by sea or the Danube to the closed military zone at Nikopol; but it was stupid to consign "sewing machines" to the War Office and still stupider to let the lid come off one of the cases while an observant Russian was passing.

In the Compulsory Labour Corps founded by Stamboliski every young man was liable for eight months' service, and an additional forty days annually until aged forty; Volkov placed reserve officers in command, the best compulsory workers were pressed to become "volunteer" soldiers. The workers drilled secretly—an Englishman once came upon some drilling with rifles upon Shipka Pass. The Corps provided cover too for pre-mobilisation measures; during 1932 all men of military age were medically examined and registered "for labour service". Then there was pre-military education in schools, every school marching with its bands and banners (girls and boys) and learning to hate Yugoslavia.

Other military formations were disguised by various names. In a country of few bicycles there was a Cyclists' Association, 18,000 strong (under the serving General Zdravko Georghiev in 1933). Then there was a Hunters' Association, a reserve Colonel its president and the serving General Diptchev its vice-president, having 40,000 adult and 15,000 junior members in smart green uniforms; they had rifle ranges in every town.

Then, among other "sporting and cultural associations", there were the Macedonia-Adrianople Volunteers, ostensibly veterans but actually officers and N.C.O.s, the cadre of the notorious "Volunteer Division"; while for rank and file Volkov decided to use Alexandrov's militia in Petritch Department. There were several advantages here. The militia might be represented as IMRO, a powerful Organisation which Bulgaria was powerless to suppress unless allowed a conscript Army; moreover this "irresponsible and uncontrollable" Organisation might banish prying eyes from Petritch Department—it banished as spies in 1925 some Americans whose firm had proposed irrigating the Department; it had ramifications in "enemy" territory already: and men who, knowing the ground, would keep Bulgaria and Yugoslavia estranged by "revolutionary action" until Italy was ready for war. Further, these Macedonians would serve again to crush Bulgarian Federalists and Agrarians "for the Cause of Macedonian Liberation", a task for

which Bulgarian troops (recruited among the people) were unreliable. After Volkov's coup the Sofia office of Mihailov and of Alexandrov's External Representatives (Parlitchev, Bajdarov and Naoum Tomalevski) was at the headquarters of the Macedonia-Adrianople Volunteers, so they were in constant touch with the War Office.

On July 13, 1923, the Chief of Staff informed all frontier commanders between Tsaribrod and the Turkish border that a closed military frontier zone ten kilometres deep was declared; nobody might enter this zone without authority except "detachments of volunteers"—so Alexandrov's bands acquired a closed concentration zone. Next, garrison commanders were ordered to hand over surplus arms and equipment to these "volunteers", who eventually disposed of at least 12,000 rifles in their depots. On June 28 the military authorities had been ordered to watch for "the fugitive renegade of IMRO, Todor Panitza".

Brlio and other voivodi were soon back in South Serbia fighting Yugoslav patrols. Pancho Mihailov, at the head of 115 men, fought a veritable battle, losing 20 killed and 21 prisoners but killing 10 and wounding 15 Yugoslav gendarmes. Alexandrov had organised some border districts well: sometimes setting Macedonian officials in Yugoslav service at the head of local organisations, which well-to-do peasants often joined to save their riches and their lives from his bands. He tried to reconstitute IMRO as in Turkish times; he issued stamps, bearing his head or a map of Macedonia, for postage through his courier service: and he ordered peasants to refer even their private affairs—disputes, marriages and so forth—to his voivodi, who "taxed" them heavily. Those who disobeyed, or complained to Yugoslav authorities, had their houses burnt and probably disappeared. Corpses by the wayside warned the truculent. A woman's mutilated body hanging from a tree, a slip of paper pinned to it reading: "We have killed you by order of the great Alexandrov because you disobeyed the Organisation"—such sights struck terror. In three years raiders murdered a hundred people in Strumitza district alone. The exasperated Yugoslavs reacted severely and often unjustly, searching villages, seizing arms, sometimes finding incriminating papers.

Through the summer and autumn of 1923 Protogerov roamed around Bitolje and Okhrid with Shandanov, Pop-Christov and fourteen men, organising but avoiding conflicts

—though Shandanov was wounded in one severe engagement. Okhrid was their home, so friends would bring great trout from the lake to them in the forests. All carried rifles except old Protogerov, who had only a revolver to be less burdened; born in 1867 he was white-haired now, though still energetic; but soon he was to gaze his last at Okhrid, tears in his eyes. During the autumn, in the neutral zone upon the Albanian border, they called a meeting to elect a new Bitolje district committee (under PopChristov and Shandanov) and twelve delegates for a general congress; yet Shandanov, as skilled with pen as with gun, wrote that they had time to admire the sunset glory behind the Albanian Mountains, gaze down upon the lake's crystal-clear waters, crack their simple jokes. Where the Yugoslav, Greek and Albanian frontiers then joined, one of them ran round the boundary pyramid crying: "Gentlemen! In three seconds I've crossed three frontiers! This is a record."

Chaoulev's headquarters were at Tirana where he kept a café; Captain Nikolov was his "waiter". A colleague opened a grocer's shop at Pogradec. Reproached from Sofia for inactivity Chaoulev replied that the Macedonian peasants were little disposed for provocative activities, though adding that the Italians were urging the new Albanian Government to accord IMRO the same support their predecessors had given; and he asked for reinforcement from Bulgaria of fifty veteran revolutionaries belonging to western Macedonia. But his talk of an independent Federal Macedonia carved from Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria and Albania and holding even Bulgaria in check infuriated the Supremists while embarrassing the Albanians who eventually expelled him to Italy.

The fugitive Agrarian leaders Daskalov, Obbov and Kosta Todorov settled in Prague; but Volkov's mafia preferred them dead, so an inspector of secret police in Sofia called Yordan Tsitsonkov, a confectioner's assistant who had deserted his family in Shtip two years before, incited him to strike a glorious blow for Macedonia's liberation and his pocket's advantage, gave him a false passport in the name of Nikolov, Daskalov's photograph and a revolver, then sent him to Prague with three other youths: one of Volkov's mafia (the Chief of Varna Police) following to see they "did their duty". On August 26 Tsitsonkov shot Daskalov dead as he left Obbov's lodgings—he died for his role in 1918; thereupon Obbov and Todorov took precautions and sur-

vived, surprisingly, to this day—though a sinister individual peeping from behind a pillar while I dined with them in Belgrade two years ago caused me apprehension until Obbov, rushing at him, found he was a detective watching for their safety. Mihailov spun the romantic story that Tsitsonkov answered Alexandrov's call to a dark forest near Skoplje, whence he was sent to kill the monster Daskalov or be killed himself. But that is a typical fabrication.

Tsitsonkov stood trial in Prague as Nikolov. He and those sent from Sofia to defend him told a harrowing tale of Macedonian tribulations and Agrarian rascality, pleading that this political murder had been committed under threat of death if he failed. He was acquitted; but before he could leave Czechoslovakia Daskalov's friends proved his name and evidence false. He was retried in October 1924. The Macedonian editor of Bulgaria's semi-official newspaper, sent to defend him, when asked if assassins were brought to trial in Bulgaria answered that he did not know. The defence collapsed. Tsitsonkov went to gaol for twenty years but committed suicide after two.

Tsankov faced the problem of establishing an apparently constitutional yet actually minority Government. The interned politicians were released—except the Radoslavovists, who stayed in gaol (for appearances' sake) till 1924, when all but the leaders were pardoned and General Jekov pensioned. The co-operatives and labour syndicates were disbanded, the giant syndicalist building in Sofia seized for Police Headquarters, the speculators and middle-men given a free hand again.

In bluff Petar Todorov Tsankov had a brilliant Finance Minister. Todorov astounded everybody by refusing to let efficient officials who had served Stamboliski be evicted from his Ministry to make way for governmental partisans while he remained in office; and he remained long after his party ceased to support the Government, to fight abuses and oppose Volkov. But he could not withstand the Minister of National Economy's measures in the interests of speculators, which brought down the value of the *lev*.

Stamboliski's Minister of Education (Omarchevski) had simplified that most disconcerting puzzle the Bulgarian alphabet by suppressing four useless letters (which the Serbian alphabet does not have) and introducing phonetic spelling. Teachers rejoiced; but Supremists, headed by Professor Miletitch at the University, howled that this was a

step towards South Slav Federation—Bulgarian nationalism, they said, was defended by the mute letter *Er Golem* (which rounds off Bulgarian names); the agitation became so fierce that Omarchevski ultimately deprived the University of its traditional autonomy. Tsankov not only restored these useless letters under penalty for their omission, but still further complicated spelling till the celebrated Professor Balabanov (himself a Macedonian from Shtip) declared he preferred to learn Chinese.

Having placated the Right by such concessions, Tsankov set about welding the ragtag and bobtail of the old parties into one National Bloc, calling this harem the Democratic Entente. Elections were fixed for October. But Tsankov and Volkov knew they could never get a majority unless they forbade Opposition propaganda and crippled the Agrarians and Communists by mass arrests.

Towards Yugoslavia Tsankov was conciliatory—he suspended certain Macedonian newspapers in Sofia; while Alexandrov told friends there must be caution until Bulgaria was stronger. Yet the Yugoslavs learnt that at a secret conference between Alexandrov's lieutenants and Government representatives a great incursion into South Serbia had been planned, IMRO receiving 30,000,000 *leva* to finance it; then immigrants' brotherhoods were ordered to recruit men, Volkov inspired an application to himself (on August 3) for Bulgarian officers and N.C.O.s to instruct and lead them—a request immediately complied with. A congress near Rila during the second week of September was attended by over 3,000 officers and revolutionaries. Thereupon Yugoslav troops began to concentrate, Bulgaria was warned that raiders would be pursued into her territory. Tsankov retorted that the only raiders existing were bands of rebels in South Serbia!

Indeed the mass incursion plan was but a pretext for mobilising Macedonian bands under chosen desperadoes against the Bulgarian Agrarians. Even raiders in South Serbia were recalled. But it seems that even Alexandrov himself was deceived—though Mihailov knew.

Tsankov may plead that he planned to forestall a Communist-Agrarian rising. The Communists were few, but discontent was rife. The Communists had a strong political party, Associations of Youths and Women, a widespread secret organisation. Among them were many ex-officers and N.C.O.s, organising a Red Army; they smuggled arms from

Russia: and they had waylaid and looted train-loads confiscated from the military by the Inter-Allied Commission and consigned to the sea during demobilisation.

At Volkov's instigation the wholesale internment of Agrarians and Communists was ordered on September 12 and began with great brutality; while Tsankov proclaimed that the Third International had ordered a Communist rising in mid-September—though he never produced any evidence. And why should the Communists and Agrarians have revolted when they knew they must inevitably win fairly-conducted elections?

As Volkov had foreseen the arrests provoked resistance. At Nova Zagora on September 20 the Communists sprang to arms, drove out the authorities and released the prisoners; though the barracks were held by 1,000 White Russians. The revolt spread; then the Agrarian Orange Guards rose too—sporadically, district by district. But many districts remained entirely passive and the Agrarian leaders took no part, so clearly the revolt was not planned—had it been it might have succeeded. In Sofia the Communists, though strong, stayed quiet (as in most towns); but there were 1,300 arrests in the capital, Mihailov and his gangsters (now calling themselves the Vardar Organisation) taking prisoners to the outskirts in lorries and cutting their throats while they knelt before graves they had dug for themselves. Asked afterwards by moderate Macedonians to give his reasons for this butchery, Mihailov answered that his victims were "enemies of The Cause". Asked for proofs, he replied: "There was no need for proofs."

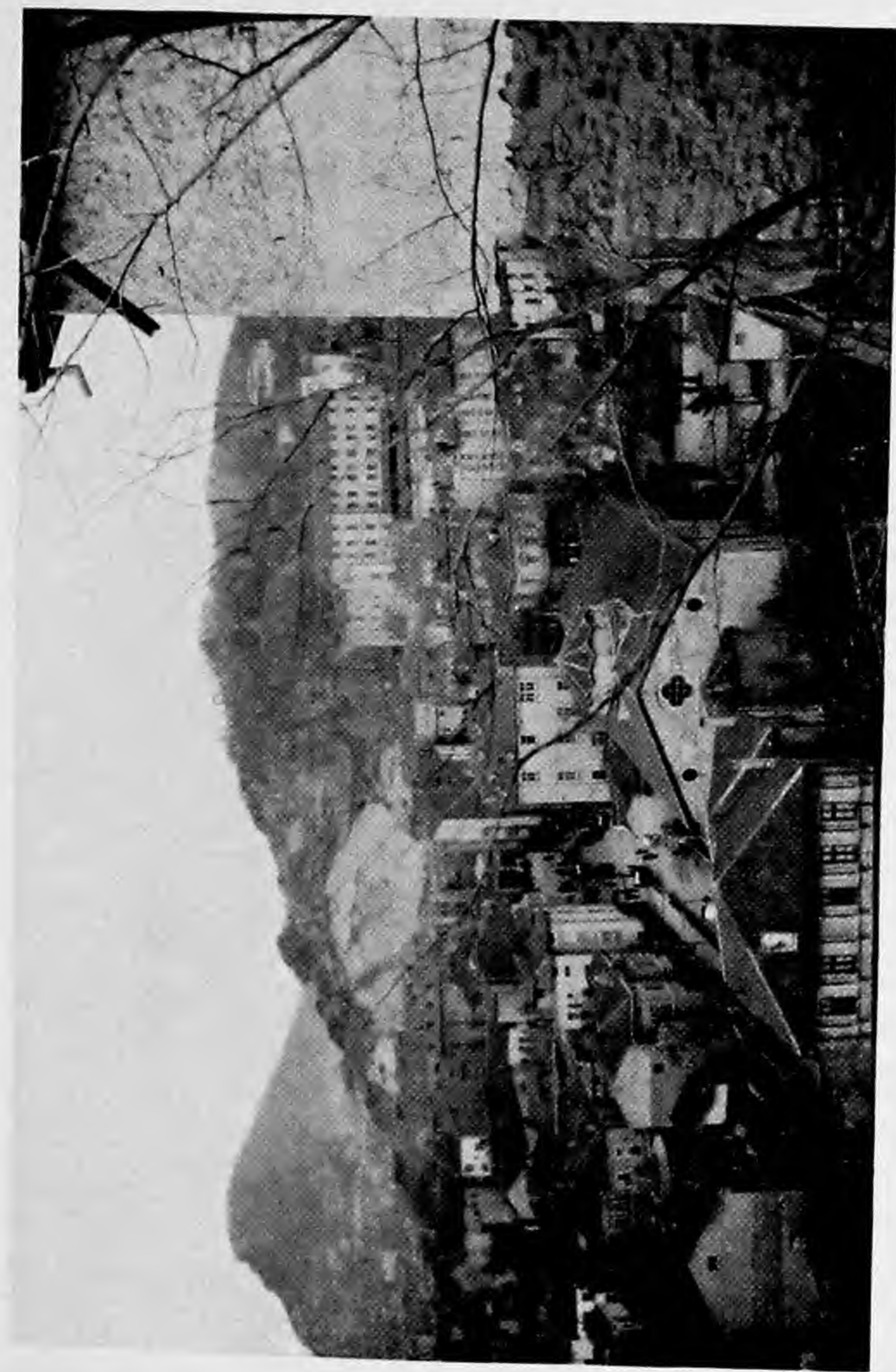
Martial law had been proclaimed immediately, so Volkov had a free hand; and his mafia had organised well, with Mihailov's help. Macedonian bands, under picked Supremists, poured into the countryside: the military called upon reserve officers and others to help them: the White Russians were called out under their Generals. These Russians (answerable to Prince Lobanov-Rostovski who lived at the Russian Legation and had assumed a Minister's dignities) played a great part afterwards described enthusiastically by White Russian newspapers. There was heavy fighting in a dozen districts, Agrarians—not Communists—soon forming the mass of insurgents; but the authorities gained control in the south before trouble began in the north. In Petritch Department, Razlog and Bansko declared for the Communists. Aleko, seeing how Volkov had deceived the Mace-

donians, declined to act against the rebels and sheltered many; however, volunteers under notorious Supremists quickly and ruthlessly quelled these revolts. Deltchev's nephew led 200 Federalists from Gorna Djoumaia but turned back on finding himself unsupported; he was cornered, surrendered unresisting to Supremist-led volunteers and was butchered with fifty followers.

Within a week Volkov's disciplined forces overcame resistance: for the rebels had been unprepared, short of rifles, without artillery or machine-guns. Many took to the mountains, while perhaps 500, perhaps 1,000 were killed in actual fighting. Over 2,000 escaped to Yugoslavia, among them the Communist leaders Kolarov and Georghi Dimitrov who told that the revolt was an Agrarian affair, though Communists had collaborated locally.

But now the bands were loose. All the latent sadism in monsters common in Bulgaria had now an unprecedented opportunity for indulgence and the consequences are comparable with the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War. Ferdinand and Berkovitza were bombarded and sacked; villages burnt: girls raped: the wounded bayoneted: prisoners mutilated. Untried men, women, priests, teachers, school-boys and girls, even babies were slaughtered by the hundred for days after the revolt ended. The towns were purged of Left sympathisers, lorries rumbling through the streets by night to take victims from their houses. From every village people "disappeared" and their dogs grew fat. The old Agrarian deputy Karvanov was truncated alive before his fellow-villagers—this just one case taken at random from a catalogue of horrors. Severe fighting at Saran Bei was a pretext for turning the place into a shambles, military lorries bringing prisoners to execution here every night for a week. Shooting was forbidden, for shots were incompatible with a pacified countryside, so bayonets and knives did the work. Many officers refused to be butchers—but there were always volunteers. Mihailov's young gangsters excelled at it. Drangov worked with Major Porkov's band. A band fifty strong worked under Captain Stoyanov in Pazardjik and Plovdiv. Eftimov, for long a spy among the Federalists, afterwards bragged of his part in crushing the Agrarians with their "Serbophile tendencies".

Officially only 1,500 were killed; but Agrarians said 15,000: diplomatic circles estimated 10,000: Kalfov, 5,000. Governmental newspapers of various factions disputed the



A view of Plovdiv.

responsibility hotly among themselves. Tsankov had threatened to drown any rising in blood; but once the revolt was provoked control passed to Volkov who bears responsibility. The Agrarians blame only Volkov, Tsankov, Roussev and Stoyentchev; the other Ministers were horrified at the extent of Volkov's excesses, Petar Todorov led an outcry against him, Boyan Smilov resigned—and in February Kazazov too (the Supremist Rachko Madjarov joining the Cabinet in their stead). Tsar Boris seems to have remained silent—perhaps insistence upon an enquiry would have been unconstitutional.

Volkov's excesses had aroused such indignation that the Government's success at the elections seemed threatened: Socialists, Radicals, Democrats and some Liberals withdrawing their support and planning to combine under Doctor Nikola Genadiev. A Macedonian from Bitolje, Genadiev's sympathies were Federalist. While in gaol during the War he had become a warm friend of Stamboliski who welcomed this erudite man's advice. His popularity grew. Thereupon orders were issued through Lieutenant Radev. On October 30 he was shot dead in Sofia by Dimiter Stefanov—who was "never found" however. A former Minister Plenipotentiary with him was wounded. Genadiev's friend and successor, Milan Grachev, shared his fate some months later.

To prove his benevolence Tsankov now decreed an amnesty; but the Agrarian leaders were in exile or gaol or dead, assassins lurked to kill any who returned: nor did the amnesty apply to those alleged guilty of revolt, incendiarism or theft. On November 10 four "soldiers" under Captain Tochev were ordered to convey the former Agrarian Minister of Justice Douparinov to Plovdiv gaol, but on the way he was "shot while attempting to escape".

Then police, Mihailovist assassins, secret agents, troops and White Russians were scattered about the countryside to "preserve order" during the election on November 18, so the Democratic Entente gained 199 seats out of 247—being most successful where the revolt had been most savagely suppressed. These elections, said the Minister of Justice, were "free as never before in the history of Bulgaria", a lie Tsar Boris reiterated when opening the Sobranié.

To ensure this freedom Agrarian and Communist candidates (among them Petko Petkov) had been locked up throughout election day; yet Petkov was elected. A former

diplomat and son of the (assassinated) Prime Minister Petkov, he had succeeded to leadership of the Agrarian Party; so when his success was known orders were issued that he should be murdered on his way home after release. But a friendly policeman warned the family who prevailed upon the French Minister to save him. Thereafter Petkov never slept two consecutive nights in the same house; but he would not go abroad and his growing prestige alarmed the Government. So Stoyentchev (now Minister of Justice and speaking with that authority) accused him of conspiring with a foreign State (Yugoslavia) to provoke revolt. In April a "conspiracy was discovered" and forty peasants tortured to make "confessions"; but an unprejudiced Public Prosecutor declared this "evidence" worthless. To further accusations Petkov retorted by pulling from his pocket a blood-stained shirt and waving it at his accusers in the Sobranié, declaring it belonged to a former Agrarian deputy whom the police had thrashed to obtain false evidence. In vain Petkov dared his accusers to bring him to trial, at the last writing himself to ask the Prosecutor to open proceedings. Upon his application the Prosecutor wrote: "File—the petitioner being dead."

On June 14 Lieutenant Radev spoke to Petkov in the street, then strolled away while the Macedonian Stoyan Karkalachev shot him. Witnesses caught Karkalachev but police released him when he showed a police pass and told that he was pursuing the murderer! However, M. Herriot, Petkov's friend, wired condolences to his family and the murder aroused such indignation in Sofia that Karkalachev was re-arrested. Petkov's lawyer moved the court to condemn Karkalachev to death; but in April 1925 Karkalachev killed the lawyer—for assassins were never executed, Tsar Boris always declining to endorse their death warrants.

Petkov's fate was compared with Matteotti's. His widow walked in his funeral procession with Genadiev's and Stamboliski's and his widowed mother. In the Sobranié Agrarians, Radicals, Democrats and Communists cried: "Assassins!"—to the Government. The Minister of Interior (Roussev) dismissed the Chief of Police, saying he felt as unsafe in Sofia as in the trenches during the War; nor had Todor Alexandrov anything to do with these political murders, which were the work of Volkov's mafia using Mihailov's hired assassins.

The Agrarians were muzzled, then labelled the Com-

munists' allies so that the world might think the Government justified in crushing them. Their surviving ex-Ministers were all acquitted in April 1924 but remained in gaol. During August Athanassov and Stoyanov escaped from hospital and fled to Yugoslavia, but Mouraviev was not released until 1925 (he preferred security in gaol to assassination).

During 1924 bands of outlaws in the mountains often clashed with troops and there was fighting near Bourgas. Some of these outlaws were fugitives who returned from Yugoslavia for vengeance or to visit their homes—it was said that between October 1923 and April 1925 there were thirty-two raids by such men (doubtless with Yugoslav local authorities' connivance); but the tale that they were equipped by the Yugoslav authorities with machine-guns and two rifles apiece (one for a comrade in Bulgaria) was, like the oft-repeated Communist conspiracy scare, an exaggeration by Volkov's agents to justify a constant agitation for the right to strengthen the Army.

Agrarian outlaws' activities were the pretext for the proclamation of martial law again on August 9, whereupon Volkov proclaimed that troops would fire without warning upon crowds (even curious and entirely peaceful crowds); and he secretly ordered (state the Agrarians) the "extermination" of Agrarian and Communist intellectuals:—" . . . lists of them must be prepared so that when the opportunity arises all the leaders may be killed, guilty and innocent . . . all prisoners, conspirators, and all sheltering them ": adding that houses sheltering rebels should be put to flames with petrol, prisoners judged and publicly executed within twenty-four hours. Death should be the penalty for disobedience to officers, likewise for the betrayal of these secret orders.

In October 1923 a Yugoslav delegation had come to Sofia to arrange, among other things, the repatriation of Macedonian immigrants in Bulgaria who had not been revolutionaries (as provided by the Nish Convention). Resenting these negotiations the Supremists staged a mild attack upon the Yugoslav Military Attaché; whereupon Yugoslavia demanded an apology: insisting that Bulgarian troops should salute the Yugoslav flag. Bulgaria reluctantly complied; but the Attaché's assailants "could not be found" and Agrarians or Communists were blamed for the outrage. The negotiations were successfully concluded nevertheless. But the Yugoslav delegates had barely left Sofia in December when Tsankov (to placate the Supremists) made an indiscreet

speech, saying "Macedonia has the right to liberty and justice . . . we demand what belongs to us". Already exasperated by revolutionary outrages Yugoslavia and Greece protested; while Yugoslav troop movements so alarmed Sofia that Tsankov hastily explained his speech had been wrongly transmitted. But the Yugoslavs were little content that Alexandrov still moved about Sofia freely—even conferring, it was said, with Tsar Boris; so the Great Powers were warned that Belgrade declined responsibility for the consequences if Bulgaria continued to harbour revolutionary bands.

Then on January 27, 1924, came news that Italy and Yugoslavia had concluded a Pact of Friendship. This, and other European developments, gave Tsankov and Kalfov their opportunity to pilot Bulgaria into more peaceful waters, an intention which immediately provoked Supremist talk of a fresh Government under the Macedonian Liaptchev—"whose influence might restrain the Macedonians".

Alexandrov's bands had redoubled their activities: Chaoulev had reinforcements: skirmishes, outrages and burning forests were the consequence. But the Yugoslavs had armed frontier villagers against raiders; and though the bands worked desperately to discourage them from resisting, distributing manifestos (in Macedonian dialect and Turkish) promising an early general rising, villagers and gendarmerie took a heavy toll of them. Led by former voivodi of IMRO who preferred Yugoslav rule to Bulgarian "liberation", the South Serbian frontier militia were organised in bands with their banners and so heartened the country-folk that soon raiders from Bulgaria found it impossible to billet themselves or obtain supplies.

Yet Bulgarophile bands were still very active throughout 1924, being ordered now to "punish" immigrants who dared return to South Serbia under the arrangement made in November. During August Pancho Mihailov, leading eighty men, fought two fierce battles with peasants, losing fifteen killed or prisoners and being carried back himself, wounded, to Bulgaria; but *Politika* wrote of the comitadjis' "extraordinary heroism and perfect tactics", a tribute Bulgarian papers never reciprocated, being too busy vilifying their opponents. There was a day-long battle in Kratovo too, Svetan Spassov's band being surrounded by peasants who were reinforced by troops with four guns; but the comitadjis held their positions under shell-fire and withdrew at night-

fall—leaving Spassov and several men dead and seven wounded prisoners.

Raiders killed Mito Sokolarski with grenades in the middle of Vinitza bazaar—one of many attacks upon former voivodi of IMRO now leading South Serbian militia; but with the death of the notoriously cruel Lazar Divljanov disappeared the last Bulgarophile band based upon Yugoslav soil. For five years Divljanov had roamed with twenty men: but in August they were cornered in a forest near Kumanovo; they held their assailants at bay for twelve hours, then tried to break away in the darkness at bayonet point: but Divljanov fell and few got through.

In February 1924 the Conference of Ambassadors again declined to let Bulgaria increase her Army. Thereupon reports had reached Belgrade (invented by Mihailov and Volkov—for Alexandrov and Protogerov were in Vienna upon quite other business) that Alexandrov was concentrating 10,000 men for a great offensive in April; while the extortion in Sofia of contributions "for the Cause" from immigrants and Jews (one of whom was shot with his child to encourage slow payers) was redoubled, even American citizens of Macedonian origin being bullied for money until the United States threatened to break off relations with Bulgaria. Yugoslavia moved troops towards the frontier, the Powers warned Bulgaria. Sofia was thoroughly alarmed, nor would Italy stand by her now. Ministers made pacific declarations, though pleading that Bulgaria was so disarmed she could not control IMRO; but five hundred Macedonian immigrants were interned (though most were Federalists and no single revolutionary leader among them). Revolutionary papers were prohibited too, though this prohibition was never enforced. However, the scare died down, nor were two further attacks (ignored by Belgrade) upon the Yugoslav Military Attaché allowed to interrupt the *rapprochement* which now began between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

In October 1923 Alexandrov had told a foreign journalist mysteriously that he had a great surprise in store for the Yugoslavs. Early the next summer curious reports began to appear. Alexandrov was telling his agents to use Communist propaganda in South Serbia; then in May he had in London negotiated an understanding with the Soviet Representative Rakovski. Next, a split in IMRO was reported, many revolutionaries being in favour of legal instead of illegal methods. In August the Yugoslav authorities found

Alexandrovist leaflets telling the peasants to vote for the Croat Agrarian leader Stepan Raditch's Party or for the Communists, because Moscow was with them all. Late in July *Politika* published a declaration by Chaoulev at Vienna saying IMRO had rallied all national revolutionary groups against all Balkan Governments *without exception*; IMRO, he added, would have no further relations with Tsankov's Government which treated the Macedonians no better than Stamboliski's and blamed them for Petkov's murder, though IMRO condemned that outrage; but it would support Raditch against Belgrade's centralisation policy.

And then, on July 22, appeared (in Vienna) the first number of *Federation Balkanique*, edited by the Bulgarian Communist Nikola Harlakov. It contained a Manifesto signed by Alexandrov, Protogerov, Chaoulev, Vlahov, Philip Athanassov, and Panitza! IMRO had united with the Federalists in alliance with Moscow!

But on August 14, *Politika* reported that Protogerov had met a Government representative at Sveti Vrach and promised obedience; then on the 20th a declaration by Alexandrov and Protogerov was published in which they said they had never signed the Manifesto. Simultaneously the Bulgarian Government repudiated Dimiter Vlahov, their (lately appointed) Consul-General at Vienna. A week later there was angry criticism of Alexandrov and Protogerov by Chaoulev and Raditch in *Federation Balkanique*; and a reply to Raditch, bearing Alexandrov's name, appeared on September 9.

Then, on September 16, a *communiqué* in Protogerov's name told the world that on August 31 Todor Alexandrov had been assassinated in Petritch Department. His death had "been avenged". An impressive memorial service was then held for him in Sofia, where all shops were closed and many houses draped with black.

Though a tissue of falsehoods has made a great mystery of Alexandrov's death, it is whispered cautiously to intimates in Sofia that Alexandrov's end was planned by General Volkov and Volkov's *alter ego*, Ivan Mihailov.

Alexandrov wished to be Macedonian Dictator, nor cared whence he drew his power. But the Federalists were too strong for him. In South Serbia the peasants wanted no more "liberation" by Bulgaria and armed to oppose raiders, but they would rally under any flag to resist Belgrade's central-

isation and win ordinary civil rights; among them the Communists were strong and most Macedonians had voted at the Yugoslav elections in 1921 for Communist candidates, who had won startling success. From Greek Macedonia Slavs were pouring into Bulgaria, urging understanding with their brother-Slavs of Yugoslavia against the alien Greeks. Aleko, now popular and all-powerful in Petritch Department, knew all this—and Alexandrov had agreed with him to negotiate with the Communists. The Communists were against Stamboliski; and Stamboliski was the fanatical Supremists' enemy too, because he would agree with Belgrade and drop the Great Bulgaria idea. Volkov and his friends had promised Alexandrov "disinterested" support once Stamboliski was overthrown, whereas Stamboliski collaborated with the Yugoslavs to thwart Alexandrov.

In the spring of 1923 Alexandrov's External Representatives Parlitchev and Bajdarov had opened negotiations against Stamboliski with Kolarov, Kabaktchiev and other Communist leaders, while a truce had been patched up with Athanasov and Ivanov. Then Hadji Dimov dissolved his *Osvoboshdenia* group and joined the Ilinden Organisation, which was headed by Georghi Zankov and Arseni Yovkov; these Federalists, while disapproving of provocative revolutionary methods, worked for Macedonian unity, maintaining that the Macedonians should have the rights of a national minority in *Bulgaria as elsewhere*. Alexandrov could not ignore their growing influence.

Negotiations with the Communists, interrupted by Volkov's coup, were resumed in July 1923. Alexandrov was alarmed to find his support of Volkov widely disapproved by the immigrants; but now he could not help himself—he dared not disobey the War Minister unless he had powerful support elsewhere. Until then he was in Volkov's hands—and Volkov wished to use IMRO for Supremist aims, control the militia, "tax" immigrants and others through Mihailov's so-called IMRO agents for his re-armament plans. Moreover Tsankov claimed minority rights for the Macedonians whose fate he considered Bulgaria's exclusive concern—he wanted no independent revolutionary movement; but most Macedonians wanted rights for themselves as Macedonians, not as Bulgarians.

So Alexandrov resolved to be independent: whereupon he was doomed—like all others with such resolve. He and his Representatives agreed to sound Moscow. Pavel Shatev

and Alexandrov's brother-in-law Mihail Monev were sent to confer at Vienna with Vlahov, Alexandrov's salaried representative (and Bulgaria's). Formerly Sandanski's lieutenant, and deputy in the Turkish Parliament during 1908, Vlahov had become Bulgaria's Consul-General in Odessa after the War and made many Bolshevik friends.

Milhailov's edition of *Freedom or Death* revealed in 1927 that Vlahov (and Monev, though his name is omitted because he was Mihailov's friend) was sent to Moscow by Alexandrov in August 1923. Philip Athanassov was there ahead of him. Vlahov lied ably and was back in Vienna while Volkov was crushing the Agrarian revolt. He told Alexandrov how he had explained IMRO's struggle against Stamboliski—in which, said Soviet representatives, the Bulgarian Communists should have collaborated. Vlahov told the Russians how IMRO worked for the masses! The Russians had flattered Alexandrov but urged unity with the Federalists.

Then Protogerov came from Okhrid to arrange a general congress. This veteran Supremist, wrote Parlitchev, had learnt by experience that IMRO must work independently and internally and if possible legally. Shandanov added that "Dado Anghel" (Protogerov) had changed his views—IMRO must revert to its original policy (adapted to changed conditions) and fight only if obliged. In fact Protogerov had discovered Deltchev and Sandanski had been right and was ready now to adopt any plan which would win ordinary liberties for the peasants. He was horrified to learn of IMRO's part in the September revolt—now the Bulgarian peasants detested IMRO (and he was wildly indignant when he subsequently discovered how Mihailov had sold IMRO's services for 30,000,000 *leva*). He was irritated by Volkov's exploitation of IMRO. Alexandrov agreed. Volkov had tricked him. The Government wished to use IMRO. Alexandrov and Protogerov agreed to seek Moscow's help.

Late in March 1924 they went to Vienna. They authorised Chaoulev and Vlahov to negotiate with Athanassov and Panitza who already worked with the Albanian, Montenegrin and Croatian revolutionaries; then they conferred with representatives of the Third International and on April 29 made a Declaration of Policy (signed by Alexandrov, Protogerov and Chaoulev). Their aim would be a united and independent Macedonia within a Balkan Federation. To this end they would collaborate with all Balkan

revolutionaries and accept the support of progressive European revolutionary movements (particularly the Russian); but they would resist by all means the Yugoslav, Greek and Bulgarian Governments, which had imperialistic aims in Macedonia, nor have any dealings with the Sofia authorities. They would publish a Manifesto in this spirit, organise Macedonian Parliamentary Groups in Balkan Parliaments with these aims, publish a paper upholding self-determination and opposing imperialism.

Next day a Protocol was signed and copies exchanged between IMRO Central Committee and the Federalists, providing for collaboration. It stipulated that there should be one united Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation; and while a Conciliation Board paved the way for a combined congress, all strife and executions should cease among them.

Then a Manifesto to the "Macedonian Nation" was prepared. Alexandrov amended the draft in his own hand, strengthening denunciation of the Bulgarian Government; he authorised Protogerov and Chaoulev to sign it on his behalf, since he had arranged to leave for London before the final draft was ready. Macedonia had a right to independence, it read. IMRO, disillusioned by neighbouring States' annexionist aims but needing help to free Macedonia, turned to the only remaining source (Russia). IMRO would work against any regime in Greece which followed the policy of de-nationalisation and exchange of populations, would oppose centralisation in Yugoslavia. In Bulgaria the new Government acted against the wishes of Macedonians and Bulgarians alike, conniving at the partition of Macedonia, even planning with Yugoslavia to take Kavalla and Salonika respectively and preparing to dissolve IMRO; so Macedonians must combine with the masses against it and, united beneath the banner of Balkan Federation, oppose fresh wars. This Manifesto was signed on May 5, 1924.

Simultaneously a statement was prepared (also amended by Alexandrov) to be signed and read out by the six Macedonian deputies in the Sobranié. It stated that they stood for the above aims: continuing that the Tsankov Government had lost all support "on both sides of Rila" and must go: that the Macedonians would support any truly democratic government having the sympathy of the working classes in town and village, likewise all political groups—even the most extreme Left—having democratic aims.

So IMRO allied itself with Russia—though it did not accept Communist doctrines. Vlahov, Athanassov and a Russian Chairman prepared for a congress upon the Albanian border in the late autumn; they defined zones of influence for Alexandrovists and Federalists. Both sides subscribed for *Federation Balkanique*. Protogerov secretly joined Aleko in Petritch Department, Hadji Dimov appealed to Nationalists and Communists to collaborate. Alexandrov sent a letter by Naoum Tomalevski to tell his External Representatives in Sofia what he had done, then Giurkov carried copies of the agreements to them. Mihailov certainly learnt of them and informed Volkov.

Early in June Alexandrov returned to Sofia. He had been well received in western Europe but found warlike activities disapproved and probably found collaboration with the Communists would be disapproved no less. Still ostensibly under Supremist control he had travelled with Professor Miletitch. In Sofia his new policy met with strong opposition, the External Representatives warning him it was suicide. On June 5 he wired for Vlahov and Chaoulev: adding that the Manifesto must not be published, nor *Federation Balkanique*; then Mihailov published an article attacking Yovkov who had written in his paper in the Manifesto's spirit. The murder of Petkov and others aroused Vlahov's and Chaoulev's suspicions, for Mihailov's independent role and relations with Volkov were not yet understood—they supposed Alexandrov and Protogerov would break their undertakings as they had broken the Tirana Protocol; so they ignored summonses to Sofia. Then Monev arrived from Sofia; he swore the murders were not Alexandrov's work and entreated them not to publish the Manifesto until Alexandrov withdrew to safety in Macedonia: adding that the situation was complicated because many young officers had joined IMRO, this making its break with the Government difficult! Vlahov and Chaoulev hesitated. Finally, distrusting Alexandrov and wishing to force his hand, they published the Manifesto on July 22, as originally agreed.

There was panic in Bulgarian official circles. The Manifesto called the whole Bulgarian bluff—it denounced the annexionist aims of those who had pleaded so eloquently for Macedonian autonomy! Moreover IMRO's alliance with Moscow was very awkward evidence that the September revolt had been no Communist rising. Newspapers publish-

ing the Manifesto were confiscated, troops in Petritch Department were reinforced, Alexandrov and Protogerov warned to repudiate their signatures or take the consequences—whereupon they declared Chaoulev and Vlahov had acted without authority and “even if we had signed such a shameful and harmful document ten times over, we should be guilty of a terrible crime if we did not withdraw when we discovered its authors’ true aims”.

District revolutionary congresses called by Aleko had heartily approved the new policy; there had been general agreement that the Central Committee must break with Sofia and dwell in Macedonia, bitter complaints against the exploitation of the peasants by Monev and certain Macedonian deputies, clamorous demand for Alexandrov’s explanation of the Sofia murders. Protogerov agreed that these murders must be explained—he had never been consulted about them. So Alexandrov decided to investigate these complaints at the Seres District Congress on September 2. Investigations would reveal Mihailov’s responsibility for the murders, his alliance with Volkov. Mihailov’s friends say Alexandrov prepared counter-charges against Aleko; but much more reliable information indicates that he stood by the Manifesto and reassured the Communists after repudiating it. Who knew this? Who had every motive for muzzling criticism? Who had the knowledge and opportunity to “frame up” the critics? Mihailov, Secretary to Alexandrov and the External Representatives, Point Chief in Sofia!

Mihailov afterwards caused a book to be published to prove a diabolical conspiracy by Chaoulev, Aleko, Colonel A, the Federalists and Communists to kill Alexandrov because he had repudiated the Manifesto. A child might be misled by its twenty-two facsimiles, some of them palpable forgeries, others signed under torture by wretched victims—as men involved in the affair admit—who were promised freedom, then killed to kill the secrets they knew.

The actual murderers were the voivodi Shteru Vlahov and Dintchu Vretenarov, Bulgarian General Staff orderlies during the War. Mihailov pretended Aleko led them to believe Alexandrov would kill them (and others too) because they had supported the Manifesto; but since neither they nor Aleko lived to give their explanations one may assume they were led to this belief (if indeed they held it) by somebody entirely different.

The motives are clear. Alexandrov and Protogerov had signed the Manifesto—their repudiation under duress meant nothing. Protogerov was old and easily influenced, yet highly thought of both in Macedonia and in the Army; moreover IMRO must have a veteran figure-head until Mihailov got control of it. But Alexandrov, younger, resolute, had shown independence: secretly he had been a Federalist at heart. The authorities must not be suspected—officially, disarmed Bulgaria was powerless to interfere with this “invincible” Organisation. Mihailov must be above suspicion too, for Alexandrov was a great figure whose aura he needed—and Mihailov was for ever afterwards “pursuing and punishing Alexandrov’s murderers”, the pretext for innumerable crimes. Alexandrov’s death would be perfect justification too for a massacre of Federalists and supporters of the Manifesto, whose corpses might be labelled Communist and accused of murdering him; then IMRO would fall into Volkov’s hands through Mihailov. In August (well before Alexandrov’s death) Mihailov prepared for this massacre by calling the Ilinden Organisation’s leaders and IMRO chiefs to a conference at Gorna Djoumaia on September 12. The stage was set, the victims designated, the assassins chosen.

It was the night of August 30. Alexandrov was at Gorna Djoumaia. He surprised his friends by going to burn candles in the church, for he was not a religious man. Had he a premonition? He knew he was in danger. Aleko sent a mule with two muleteers to carry Alexandrov’s baggage to the village beyond Melnik where the Congress would be. When “interrogated” in November the muleteers said Shteru Vlahov and Vretenarov had told them secretly beforehand that Aleko had ordered Alexandrov’s death; then, having given this “evidence”, they were murdered.

They all set out next day. There were Alexandrov and Protogerov, Shteru Vlahov and Vretenarov escorting them, Alexandrov’s personal bodyguard Panzo, and the two men with the mule. On their way they stayed to rest. They all lay down—Shteru Vlahov and Vretenarov behind the others. When all were still the assassins got up—and fired. It was easy. Panzo leapt to his feet but was shot too. Then the assassins fled. Protogerov (unarmed) started to his feet: but when he saw Alexandrov was dead he fell in a swoon as he sometimes did in moments of great emotion. When he recovered he was speechless with dismay.



Picturesque corners of Macedonia. (*Above*) Sveti Naoum Monastery upon Lake Okhrid. (*Below*) A street in ruined Melnik.

Mihailov afterwards pretended the two leaders were bitter foes; but their quarrels, on his own showing, were the disputes of friends—the one overbearing and ruthless, the other conciliatory. “The very foundation of all our work,” wrote Protogerov to Alexandrov on August 20, “is our friendship. But you do not behave like a friend towards me—you have spoken much against me . . . you consider me a fool, fit only for a monastery . . . I cannot sleep for grief.” The old man did all he could to preserve IMRO's unity, negotiating with all, friendly with all, striving to prevent the disaster Mihailov planned and for which he afterwards blamed his victims.

The muleteers carried Protogerov down to Aleko who cancelled the Congress, ordered pursuit of the assassins, then telegraphed to Mihailov at Sofia (in Alexandrov's and Protogerov's names) to come immediately with the External Representatives. This telegram gave no hint of tragedy; but Mihailov, clearly fearing his perfidy discovered, said at first: “Todor is there, so I must stay here”; but afterwards, having doubtless received reassuring reports, he went with the others.

As this party approached the little chapel where Alexandrov and Panzo lay they were met by Arghir Manassiev who told them: “Todor is dead. Two of his assassins are known.” Everyone was thunderstruck, Mihailov managing to look horrified like the rest. At the graveside were Aleko, Colonel A, and other Congress delegates; but Aleko said the assassins had not been caught—evidently suspicious, he certainly wished to spare the physical murderers until he knew their instigators. All agreed Alexandrov's death should be kept secret until the Conference at Gorna Djoumaia so that investigations might be made (but the news would obviously have leaked out had there been any widespread plot). Protogerov tottered to the funeral, then returned to Sofia with Mihailov and the others; while he lay prostrate (and Chaoulev being abroad) Mihailov issued orders in his name.

On their way to Sofia Mihailov asked the others: “Did you notice how nervous I was at the funeral? I wanted to fling myself at the assassins Aleko and Colonel A.” Thus he explained his own nervousness, while stirring suspicion of those whose death he had planned: and his companions, believing still in his loyalty, were persuaded to his way of thinking. All Bulgaria had been under martial law since August 9. Ivan Karadjov, a teacher lately expelled from

IMRO by Aleko, had organised the massacre with Volkov and Mihailov.

In an upper room at Gorna Djoumaia the Conference opened late on September 12. The room and the courtyard below were filled with well-armed men. Giurkov, Shandanov, Drangov and others were there: their victims too: and Protogerov—but he knew nothing of Mihailov's arrangements and hoped this meeting would bring complete understanding.

There were friendly speeches; but there is no account of what happened, save Mihailov's fiction. Protogerov, Aleko and Colonel A agreed the Vienna Manifesto should be upheld, though cautiously. Someone said Alexandrov had been a difficult character. But they were waiting for Mihailov: Aleko would not let them begin the formal Conference without him. Mihailov declares Aleko had met Alexandrov's assassins on September 7—and certainly Aleko knew the truth now, or guessed it. Shteru Vlahov and Vretenarov had written to the Conference (probably at Aleko's instigation) saying they wished to explain; Aleko said they must be called, to which Protogerov and many others agreed. Aleko planned to denounce Mihailov here: had particularly urged Mihailov to be sure to come! But the one person who never came to the Conference was that bold Secretary! At the last minute he sent word from Sofia that he was ill (though he was well enough to visit friends).

Aleko suspected treachery and had told his men to be prepared; but what he did not know was that Volkov's troops were surrounding the town. The "liquidation" was timed for night-fall, when gunmen from Sofia and troops of the garrison might take up positions about the town unnoticed. At 9 p.m. Pancho Mihailov called Aleko from the room to hear "a message from Sofia". Outside, he received it—Drangov shot him dead. It was the signal. Assassins (who had come into the room as Protogerov's bodyguards) shot their allotted victims as they sat unarmed. Colonel A leapt from the balcony but was caught and cold-bloodedly despatched in the middle of the market square by Assen Daskalov—"those who shot him did not know how precious his evidence would have been", lamented Mihailov *afterwards*! Aleko's men below began firing through the floor and throwing bombs but were shot down by troops "preserving order". Old Protogerov, again stunned and perplexed,

begged that the killing should stop—his enemies pretend he pleaded for his own life.

All over Bulgaria assassins marked down their unsuspecting victims—the old leaders of IMRO and all who stood for Deltchev's ideas; they were shot down like dogs, their remains accused of conspiracy. Of IMRO's founders only PopArzov and Christo Tatartchev survived—the first because he had long since withdrawn from Macedonian affairs, the other because he was abroad. Yet Sofia weeps still for "unliberated Macedonian brothers!" Nor, at this very time, did Supremists forget to raise cries of horrified protest at the massacre near Tarlis on July 27 of fourteen Macedonian peasants by a Greek officer, a former revolutionary—though circumstances suggest that this massacre may have been instigated in Sofia.

About Vretenarov's and Shteru Vlahov's fate Mihailov contradicts himself. He says Protogerov asked an officer to hunt them down: tried to save their lives: had no say whatever in IMRO's affairs after Alexandrov's death and was virtually a prisoner. Probably Protogerov tried to save them to learn the truth from them: which is why troops hastily burnt them alive in the house that sheltered them. Troops co-operated with bands under Filipov, Vapzarov and others, hunting and slaying all Aleko's friends and family in Petritch Department. Perhaps a hundred and eighty revolutionaries were killed in this fortnight. Georghi Penkov, Sandanski's friend, famous for bombing in 1906 a Sofia bank which would not subscribe to IMRO, surrendered fearlessly to the military with his band; whereupon he was interrogated in Sofia by Krstan PopTodorov who found nothing against him save friendship with Aleko and Colonel A; but Mihailov interrogated him again and, although declaring the results not worth laying before his investigating colleagues, had him murdered (so that he might afterwards pin to Penkov's name false evidence against Protogerov).

Posthumous death sentences were passed on the victims upon childish (though illuminating) evidence, much of it extracted by threat of death and promise of freedom from about forty witnesses interrogated in Sofia and elsewhere and murdered by Mihailov's gangsters when they had said and signed all required of them. "Proof" of Colonel A's dark intentions was a list in his diary of revolutionary leaders and groups who would, might, or certainly would not follow him, Aleko and Protogerov in the new policy; from which it

was deduced that he planned to exterminate all upon the opposition list, among them the entire Macedonian Youth and Vardar Students' Organisations! By this list, he and Aleko had the support of all Petritch Department. Colonel A's real crime was his insistence upon friendship with Panitza's Federalists; while Aleko wanted collaboration with the Yugoslavs against the Greeks, and the Vienna Manifesto policy as a means to this end. They were accused of nothing until dead, then called corrupt contrabandists. Yovkov's, Hadji Dimov's, and Kantardjiev's crime was their continued support of the Manifesto, in defiance of Volkov; the others died for being their friends or relatives. It is impossible to say whether Protogerov, still unaware of Mihailov's treachery, agreed to the posthumous death sentences (or whether Mihailov signed for him); but the victims were dead anyway.

The world was told this massacre was vengeance for Alexandrov's assassination by Aleko, who had planned a Communist Republic; but leaflets told the people of South Serbia that Alexandrov had been killed at Yugoslav instigation and Yugoslav officials would pay for it! Chaoulev proclaimed the Bulgarian Government responsible for the whole business however, and called for an international enquiry; but Mihailov had not forgotten to silence Chaoulev—his "crime" was acceptance of money from the Soviet Representative in Rome (and, much later, Mihailov pretended Protogerov had ordered his execution). Early in September Stefan Dimitrov left Sofia with a gun and a photograph. Chaoulev had retired to Milan under an assumed name. Perhaps the Italian authorities know how Dimitrov found and shot him in a Milan café on December 23, 1924. Tried in April 1926, Dimitrov was acquitted by the Italians because he had "killed a Communist by order of IMRO, under menace of death if he failed". He returned in triumph to Sofia.

CHAPTER VIII

VOLKOV'S "ALTER EGO"

ALEXANDROV would be perpetuated "rather as a saint than as a hero," wrote Mihailov while slipping into his victim's shoes and pushing his young assassins into key positions in IMRO. Of the Central Committee only Protogerov survived, so a congress was necessary to elect new members.

Parlitchev and Bajdarov advised Protogerov to undertake the lighter work of organising the Macedonians in America; hurt, he answered indomitably that he could still do his duty. But all agreed there should be a young man upon the Committee too, so the energetic Mihailov was asked if he would be nominated. He had already arranged a frantic agitation in his favour among his followers, but now he answered cunningly that there were, perhaps, "others with a better claim because I am not yet an active revolutionary".

"No matter," was the reply. "The other candidates, Protogerov and PopChristov, are veterans."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mihailov, "I don't know whether I can work with Protogerov. I have suspicions. When he had killed the others at Gorna Djoumaia Drangov for a moment levelled his revolver at Protogerov. He suspects Protogerov was an accomplice in Alexandrov's assassination. So do I."

"But Drangov's instructions were definite! And why raise that now, months after all those considered guilty are dead?"

Mihailov was evasive. The others were annoyed.

But at the final meeting in Sofia of IMRO's High Council (normally the Central Committee and External Representatives) Mihailov declared he had found no grounds whatever for his suspicions, asked the others to forget them, said he had no hesitation in joining Protogerov upon the Central Committee.

On February 5, 1925, the VI Revolutionary Congress (in Petritch Department, under the deputy Anghel Ouzou-

nov's presidency) elected Protogerov, PopChristov and Mihailov, with Shandanov as reserve member. At Mihailov's insistence the Petritch and Skoplje districts were placed under his control, though he could not induce the Congress to consider Petritch Department as "revolutionary territory"; however, he lost no time in appointing his young assassins voivodi of the Department, saying this was a preliminary to more energetic revolutionary work. To Protogerov fell the Seres, Drama and Salonika districts; to PopChristov, Bitolje, Okhrid and Prilip. At Mihailov's suggestion the Congress ordered the Committee to seek out and punish all surviving accomplices in Alexandrov's assassination; but in spite of him it defined IMRO's aims as either a Macedonia united and independent (including Petritch Department) under the League of Nations or autonomous within a South Slav or Balkan Federation.

Not long afterwards Protogerov and PopChristov went across the border to organise. They asked Mihailov to come too but he declined, saying there was time enough. "But Macedonia wants revolutionaries; yet you, the youngest of us, stay in safety!" exclaimed Protogerov. But never did this "hero" (of imaginative journalists) risk his life beyond the frontier. While far from safety Protogerov fell dangerously ill and thought of killing himself, but Ivan Brata carried him back to Bulgaria by stages and by night.

Nikola Milev, president of the Sofia Journalists' Association, had been nominated Bulgarian Minister in Washington; but he disapproved of Volkov and held Federalist sympathies. A Supremist Macedonian Committee formed in Chicago in 1914 under the auspices of the Bulgarian Legation at Washington, had gained the ear of the *Chicago Tribune*. In 1918 it petitioned for the annexation of Macedonia to Bulgaria; but it represented barely 4% of American Macedonians. Milev might prevent Mihailov from exploiting this Macedonian colony. Moreover his death would be a warning alike to Volkov's opponents in Government circles and to journalists. On February 13, 1925, he was shot in the middle of Sofia. Since his assassins escaped, the crime was easily ascribed to "Communists and extreme Agrarians, with the possible connivance of the Federalist Macedonians", so a wide field for "vengeance" opened and two Communist deputies were shot within a fortnight.

Hippocrate Razvigorov, who murdered one of the deputies, alleged when arrested that he had acted under

Volkov's orders (whereupon he was released); but this caused Volkov an awkward moment; so thereafter, orders to kill were issued through Mihailov, in writing, and bore the red seal of IMRO, each murder being followed by an IMRO *communiqué* to the Press, sometimes giving a reason for the murder, sometimes stating tersely that explanations would be laid before the next revolutionary congress—which, however, Mihailov managed to postpone. And so innumerable crimes were committed in IMRO's name, though they were entirely unconnected with it. The assassins were called "the punitive division of IMRO"; some believed they served The Cause, others were criminals who killed for a living, all belonged to so low an order that they seldom knew their victims who had to be pointed out to them. All swore allegiance to IMRO and were (theoretically) liable to execution if they failed in their allotted tasks.

Of the Federalist leaders, Dimiter Vlahov and Athanassov were at loggerheads, Vlahov being too Red for Athanassov; but Panitza, elusive, daring, and now a Yugoslav subject, was dangerous "for what he planned to do"—he was negotiating through Jika Lazitch for understanding between the Macedonians and the Yugoslav Government. So Panitza was the next to fall—his death was a dowry!

In 1923 there lived at Tsaribrod a money-changer named Dimiter Karnitchev. He and his wife were Vlachs from Krouchevo. He had a smart daughter, ambitious and masterful, with soulful eyes. Among his clients was Panitza, who generally called upon Karnitchev during his secret comings and goings over the frontier, partly to change money, partly to see fair Mentcha. And Mentcha, being a Vlach and so having a Roumanian passport, became Panitza's courier. Keen to catch Panitza, Mihailov watched Karnitchev. Finding that Mentcha came often to Sofia, he caught her and put her through an inquisition which she bore so stoically that he was impressed. He let her go.

But early in 1924 Mihailov tried other tactics. He invited Mentcha to join IMRO. There were inducements. She said she would. Thereupon he told her she must first prove her loyalty by killing Panitza. After some thought she agreed—upon one condition. If she succeeded, Mihailov must marry her! Evidently she foresaw his rise to fame. Mihailov agreed. He told the tale to a friend of mine, but added: "Do not tell Alexandrov in case he should think I run after women"—an excuse, because at this time

Alexandrov was negotiating with Panitza in Vienna, though Volkov wished him dead!

Eventually Mentcha went "to sell rose oil" in Vienna. Panitza asked her to stay with him. She lived as one of his family for months but dared not kill her host in his home, fearing his bodyguards' vengeance; so at Mihailov's suggestion she persuaded Panitza to take her to the theatre—it would be more spectacular and she could surrender to the police before Panitza's guards intervened. So on May 8, 1925, Panitza took his wife, Mentcha, and another friend to see *Peer Gynt*. They took a box. Panitza's bodyguards sat in cheap seats.

Upon the stage Death was about to recite: "It is not in the middle of the fifth act that one dies." Mentcha anticipated him. From her handbag she drew a revolver and—amid the rolling of theatrical thunder—emptied it at her host. Panitza fell dead. His wife and friend were wounded. Two girls in the box below were drenched in blood. There was pandemonium. But Mentcha gave herself up. Poor Mentcha! Her health was so bad, pleaded my Bulgarian secretary, enthusiastically describing her flashing eye and magnetic personality and trying to soften my judgment. Mentcha was treated with less courtesy than IMRO thought her due, *Freedom or Death* commenting that "this is neither Christian nor moral". She was condemned to eight years' imprisonment but her bad health soon led to her release. In Sofia she was hailed as a heroine—and Mihailov married a worthy wife. Her father prospered—he bought a house in Sofia and built a villa in a suburb which became Mihailov's favourite resort.

Next, Mihailov determined to be rid of Pancho Mihailov. The first was known to his friends by the diminutive of Ivan—Vancho. Pancho—Vancho! This was tiresome! Both hailed from Shtip, but Pancho's heroic exploits dangerously emphasised Vancho's cowardice. In a despatch dropped during his battles in August 1924 and published by the Yugoslavs, Pancho had written that IMRO was unpopular among the Macedonians of South Serbia—a serious matter because this truth must not be known in Bulgaria; so Vancho's district tribunal at Petritch had condemned Pancho to death upon the delicious pretext that he slept with women; but Protogerov and PopChristov declined to ratify the sentence. So Pancho had been brought to Sofia for further interrogation; but he escaped with the help of

the man guarding him—who had followed him in many exploits: whereupon Vancho had the man summarily hanged. However, upon the others' promise that he would not be killed if he submitted to their interrogation, Pancho gave himself up again, was acquitted, and told to stay at Gorna Djoumaia.

But while Protogerov and PopChristov were abroad Pancho came to Sofia and had a night out with some Yugoslav girl singers. Fraternisation with the enemy was an unpardonable crime. "IMRO has convicted Pancho Mihailov. He must be found and killed wherever he is," ordered Vancho; whereupon he was shot in Sofia in June 1925. In a long obituary the Belgrade *Politika* generously praised his courage, incidentally mentioning Vancho's name for the first time. Pancho had once written:

"I would like, mother dear,
To be buried in my own country,
Where none can find my tomb
But the wandering minstrel and the sad moon."

"What was Pancho's crime?" asked the others when they returned. Vancho answered that "he contemplated certain offences"—in fact he contemplated Yugoslav Federation. Panitza's death too had aroused much anger in Nevrokop, whereupon Vancho murdered a hundred of his adherents there. In August he had the celebrated Brlio killed also, "because of his banditry" (which happened to be a very reasonable excuse). These promiscuous and unauthorised murders soon aroused the others' disgust and suspicion; but Vancho was their equal and supreme in Petritch Department, so all they could do was to withhold their signatures from posthumous death warrants; and as these had to be signed by all the Central Committee before the Revolutionary Congress would ratify them, Vancho perpetually found pretexts for postponing the Congress.

In April 1925 Mihailov's assassins further distinguished themselves in Volkov's service. Volkov's repressive measures had continued, despite violent protests by Opposition leaders and by Petar Todorov who was spokesman in the Cabinet for the Officers' League (which was fast turning against Volkov). There had been nearly two hundred murders during the winter, some certainly reprisals; but the discovery of a bomb beneath the Military Club was probably a ruse to

scare officers who urged moderation. There was a mutiny in a frontier garrison, talk of a mass attack by bands upon Tsaribrod (which provoked a stern Yugoslav warning), outlaws roamed the Balkan range. In February martial law was partially reimposed and more mass arrests followed.

It is supposed that it was a band of outlaws which, on April 14, ambushed Tsar Boris upon Araba Konak Pass as he was driving with friends. The steep road makes here a double hairpin bend among bushes and trees. By the official story two men in the Tsar's car were killed, his moustache grazed, the chauffeur stunned by a bullet through the windscreen. Unable to turn the car the Tsar dashed to cover while firing at the assailants, ran to a mail-van down the road, rushed in it to Orhanié and brought soldiers. Meanwhile the assailants had rifled the dead men's pockets, this suggesting that they were simple bandits and may not have recognised the Tsar.

Two days later an appalling outrage shook Sofia. Late on April 14 the deputy and retired General Konstantin Georghiev, president of the Governmental Party's Sofia branch, had been assassinated by unknown men. On April 16, relatives, friends, ministers and officers congregated in Sveti Nedelia Cathedral for his funeral. Suddenly there was a roaring explosion. A time bomb in the cathedral dome exploded and the roof collapsed. Several hundreds of people were injured and 128 killed—among them fourteen reserve generals (including Nikola Ratchev), three deputies, the Mayor of Sofia and Chief of Police.

It is not surprising that the victims' relatives clamoured for vengeance, that all Parties supported the Government, that authorities lost their heads, that excesses were committed, that the Communist Party was declared illegal and its deputies expelled from the Sobranié. There was motive for an Agrarian or Communist attempt to decapitate the bourgeoisie; but if there had been the widespread conspiracy the Government alleged and if the document produced to prove its reality (but afterwards never mentioned) was not a fake, why then was there no revolt and why did the Agrarians and Communists let themselves be arrested in unresisting thousands? This was Volkov's chance. A flow of official rumours of impending Communist-Agrarian revolt had preceded the outrage. No leading chauvinists lost their lives by it. I have no evidence—but a hideous suspicion. Must

it (and the attack upon the Tsar too) be classed with the Zinoviev Letter and the Reichstag Fire?

Martial law and curfew were proclaimed, volunteers called to patrol the streets, house to house searches made, thousands of "suspects" arrested. Three British Labour M.P.'s who happened to be in Bulgaria were hustled away and their interpreter murdered.

Two reserve engineer officers, Captains Minkov and Yankov, were said to have laid the bomb; but both were "killed while resisting arrest" *in their houses at Sofia*. Ten other men were court martialled. Five of them were condemned to death *in contumaciam*, three being burnt before trial, while Georghi Dimitrov and the fifth were abroad; but a Jewish lawyer Friedmann, a reserve Colonel Koev, the cathedral beadle Zadgorski, and two youths were accused of helping or sheltering Minkov and Yankov. Zadgorski had admitted them to the cathedral; but Friedmann and Koev protested complete innocence. However, all three were hanged in public, an unique entertainment which drew 40,000 spectators. Four French were also condemned to death but their sentences afterwards commuted.

Lists of those to die had been prepared. All Agrarian leaders were immediately arrested—though certainly they would have hidden well had they been accomplices in the outrage; the former Ministers Petar Yanev and Kyril Pavlov were burnt alive with several of their friends in the great heating furnace at Sofia Police Headquarters, the reserve Generals Topaldjikov and Litchev (who had served Stamboliski) were carried off to Kustendil and never again heard of. To this day a summons to Police Headquarters fills Bulgarians with terrible apprehensions—a fall from its top windows is easy "suicide".

Officially there were in four months eighty-one trials involving 3,557 persons, of whom 300 were condemned to death and 611 to imprisonment; but "where are all the thousands of Bulgarian citizens who were arrested and have since disappeared mysteriously?" asked the Radical Kostourkov afterwards. Agrarians say 5,000 perished. Between June 1923 and the end of April 1925 no less than forty-seven Agrarian or Communist deputies and five Agrarian Ministers were murdered. Tsankov admitted that hundreds of teachers had been killed. A "Widows' and Orphans' Relief Fund" was raised in England, Miss Susan Lawrence declaring that the "Government are deliberately availing them-

selves of the horror caused by the cathedral outrage to exterminate their political opponents"—the truth if she had qualified the word "government".

Meanwhile things were going badly for raiders in South Serbia. Kyril Grigorov, arrested in Sofia for attempted (non-political) murder, was promised pardon if he would kill Stoyan Mischev, now in Yugoslav service as militia leader at Shtip; so he "escaped" across the frontier with the help of Bulgarian authorities who then issued a warrant for his arrest to disarm Yugoslav suspicion. He shot Mischev, was caught and executed, and became a martyr in Sofia.

But men were deserting IMRO fast and enrolling against it under voivodi like Mischev. Foremost among these voivodi was Pandurski, formerly a café proprietor at Gorna Djoumaia. Early in 1923 Pandurski, who belonged to Hadji Dimov's Communist-Federalist group, had fled with others from Alexandrov to Yugoslavia, helped by the Mayor of Doupnitza whom Alexandrov promptly executed. Heading a band wearing Communist emblems, Pandurski had then raided back across the border, killing several of the Alexandrovists who ultimately hanged seven of his men. Then came Alexandrov's truce with the Federalists. Ultimately Pandurski joined the South Serbian border militia against the Mihailovists.

Early in 1925, with forty men, Pandurski went to his home near Gorna Djoumaia, killed Mihailov's local voivode, collected his step-mother, four sisters and two brothers, loaded their belongings upon donkeys, then returned with them to Yugoslavia, leaving behind him copies of *Make-donsko Zusnanié* which presented the views of that large Macedonian faction working with the Yugoslav authorities.

One day in June Christo Vanghelov fired shots at a Mihailovist voivode, then fled across the frontier. The Bulgarian police posted him as wanted; but the Yugoslavs, suspicious, interned him. However, Pandurski got Vanghelov released, but told him he must prove his loyalty by going back to Petritch Department and killing voivode Koucho. Vanghelov went. Secretly he met Koucho and arranged the next act.

Koucho set off alone. Vanghelov threw grenades at him. Koucho fell. The tale went round that he was dead. Vanghelov recrossed the frontier and joined Pandurski's band.

With Vanghelov and others Pandurski was patrolling the frontier, perhaps preparing to raid Mihailov's stronghold

again—for counter-raids there undoubtedly were while the Yugoslav authorities followed the Bulgarians' example by looking the other way. They stayed to rest. When all were asleep Vanghelov hid their rifles, then shot Pandurski and two others as they lay. Then he rejoined Koucho.

Other "traitor" voivodi were assassinated too; but several raiding bands were annihilated during the summer of 1925. One made a heroic stand near Tsarevo Selo however. Seeing themselves surrounded the comitadjis held their fire, then shot down thirty South Serbian militiamen who stumbled upon them; they sang revolutionary songs while holding other assailants at bay until sunset, when they suddenly charged with bayonets and bombs and escaped. But that was almost the end of band warfare—the people of Macedonia were beating their "liberators".

In four years 300 raiders had been killed and the double wounded. Moreover, though comitadjis had free rail passes in Bulgaria, good jobs while "resting", the help of a "Todor Alexandrov Fund" raised by deductions from soldiers' pay, and other privileges, it was hard to find men because Bulgarians alone (whose dialect would betray them) would not do and most immigrants were against revolutionary work now. Protogerov and PopChristov wanted an end of unnecessary fighting and secret propaganda only; but this might lead Europe to suspect that South Serbia was *not* seething with discontent, so Mihailov organised groups of three (troika) to commit provocative outrages.

Meantime there came a sudden opportunity for the Petritch militia—"IMRO Reserve"—to distinguish itself. On October 21, 1925, Greek troops invaded the Department.

The affair alarmed Europe and gave the League of Nations an easy success over the Greek Dictator General Pangalos. The Bulgarians declared that late on the 19th a Greek soldier (Zatafiris) from a frontier post upon Mount Belassitza crossed the boundary line and fired at a Bulgarian sentry, whereupon Bulgarians shot Zatafiris. A Greek Captain and several men, advancing under a white flag to recover the body, were shot too. Greece immediately demanded an indemnity: and when Bulgaria proposed a joint enquiry first the Greek Government—acting upon alarmist early reports—ordered military occupation of Bulgarian territory until an indemnity was paid. So Greek troops suddenly debouched from Rupel gorge, stormed three Bulgarian posts, shelled Petritch station.

Protogerov was sick, PopChristov abroad, Mihailov no soldier—he paid only one very fleeting visit to the fighting zone. Volkov told the External Representatives his troops could not defend Petritch but the militia should resist as if spontaneously; IMRO's name must not appear however: no uniforms must be issued: civilians were officially forbidden to oppose the Greeks: and in appealing to the League of Nations Bulgaria declared her few troops were withdrawing without resistance.

Giurkov (a reserve officer) was sent to Simitli with full powers, "disobedient civilians broke into military depots"; soon 5,000 irregulars were resisting the invaders. The Bulgarians had only 600 troops with twelve guns in the field under Colonel Pencho Zlatev; whereas three Greek battalions advanced with artillery and aircraft. The Greeks' objective was Petritch town, but well-disciplined militia held a line before it so stubbornly that they were unable to advance without reinforcements—and before these arrived the League of Nations had intervened, on the 24th, ordering the Greeks to suspend hostilities.

Among other tales the Macedonians tell that Ivan Brata carried a machine-gun into position and mowed down 120 Greeks. Other heroes were Mihail Stanoiev, Dimiter Dimashev and Boris Izvorski, old voivodi thanked by the War Office and afterwards shot by Mihailov.

On the 28th the British, French and Italian Military Attachés arrived from Belgrade. A revolutionary who had come from Sofia to command a militia detachment told me how he and his men were in a field eating peppers when the French Attaché came by unexpectedly with Colonel Zlatev. The Frenchman, seeing armed men, enquired of Zlatev who they might be. Zlatev, giving my informant a warning look, replied: "We could not restrain the local people." Then my informant added: "I am an ex-officer, a school teacher here. My boys and I broke into a military depot and took arms to defend our homes." The existence of this well-organised militia in contravention of the Neuilly Treaty must not be known—nor did journalists from Sofia tell of it.

Since the Greeks remained upon Bulgarian soil and indulged in desultory firing, Zlatev determined to attack them on the 30th; so militia concentrated to cut their communications through Rupel gorge; but late on the 29th the Greeks withdrew. A League Commission of Enquiry under Sir Horace Rumbold found Greece had violated the Covenant,

so she had to pay 30,000,000 *leva* (£45,000) to Bulgaria; moreover a scheme for Greco-Bulgarian frontier supervision by two Swedish officers was adopted, though unfortunately not extended to the Bulgaro-Yugoslav frontier. The Bulgarians lost 25 killed but like to say they killed 250 Greeks. Much wilful damage and several mutilated corpses were seen by correspondents and attributed to the Greeks, but possibly the corpses were mutilated by Macedonians (who always had "traitors" to dispose of) for propaganda purposes.

Tsankov and Kalfov had been working for better relations with Yugoslavia, Tsankov visiting Belgrade in December 1924 and Kalfov in May 1925; then Roussev had dismissed the district governors of Petritch and Kustendil for belonging to IMRO, arrested some agitators, and made other gestures of goodwill. In September Tsankov met Pasitch at Geneva.

Bulgaria's changing attitude and the consolidation of Yugoslavia by the Pasitch-Raditch Coalition in September 1925 were too much for Italo-Yugoslav friendship. The Italian Minister paid 2,000,000 *lire* (it is said) to Naoum Tomalevski for IMRO and promised a regular subsidy; whereupon a fierce campaign began in Sofia against the "bloody neighbours": while rumours spread of impending outrages, and of negotiations with foreign revisionist groups.

Throughout 1925 there had been talk of a *coup d'état* by Volkov against Tsankov who, supported by several Ministers and encouraged by the Chief of Staff, General Stoyanov (on behalf of the Officers' League), asked Tsar Boris upon four separate occasions to supersede the War Minister; but each time the Tsar declined to exercise this prerogative.

Then in December it was rumoured that Tsankov planned a Customs Union with Yugoslavia; while Kalfov declared the whole Bulgarian people desired friendship with Yugoslavia, knowing that without her they could not prosper. "Belgrade has understood us and that is enough for us," concluded Kalfov. But that was not enough for Tsar Boris who disliked Kalfov and his policy too. He conferred with Volkov and Liaptchev (of Tsankov's Democratic Entente); then a frantic agitation began against Tsankov, all the horrors of the past two years being ascribed to him till the unthinking masses clamoured for his downfall. On January 3, 1926, the Sobranié was packed with deputies who had been rallied against him and he was defeated. He demanded fresh elections conducted by a Business Cabinet, knowing Volkov's adherents would be swept away if the public were

told the facts. The Tsar demurred. Thereupon General Stoyanov went to the Palace to insist; but his sensational *démarche* failed because (wrote the Bulgarian *Near East* Correspondent) "no sovereign is more attached to constitutional forms of government than King Boris, who was firmly supported by General Volkov in the matter of the Army's political neutrality"! So Tsankov retired, becoming President of the Sobranié.

Volkov waited until June, when his position seemed secure; then, saying the Army had gradually obtruded into politics, he purged it of "chiefs who had violated its neutrality"! General Stoyanov and others were pensioned with the Tsar's (necessary) consent, the Officers' League was declared dissolved, Colonel Bakardjiev became Chief of Staff. Tsankov protested, threatening to split the Governmental Bloc: but Liaptchev and Volkov were "adamant in proscribing all political influence in the Army" which, it was proclaimed, now became "more united than ever around King Boris and General Volkov".

The Italophile Liaptchev, who headed the new Cabinet, took charge of the Ministry of Interior too! Volkov stayed at the War Office: Athanas Bourov became Foreign Minister: Alexander Mollov, Finance Minister: and Kimon Georghiev—who had not rejoined the Army in 1923—Minister of Communications. There was belief that better times would follow—for an obtuse public had not realised Volkov's occult power, while some Ministers thought to check it. But nothing changed. There was less massacring, for the Agrarian and Communist Parties were already decapitated; but minor horrors continued, to prevent them from growing fresh heads. An Amnesty Bill prepared by Tsankov was extended to cover assassins but not 2,000 political prisoners of the Left: and when some Agrarians did return from exile they were arrested or shadowed by assassins. Another Amnesty Bill (passed with great difficulty in 1929) covered Radoslavov and released more assassins.

In March 1926 Obbov, Todorov, Nedelko Athanassov, Stoyanov, Yanev, Pavlov, and others, charged with organising bands against the previous regime, were retried *in contumaciam* and condemned to be hanged—so the burning of Yanev and Pavlov was legitimised (without enquiry)! An assassin sent to murder surviving Agrarian leaders abroad and poison the water in their concentration camp at Pojarevatch was arrested in November. No appeals from abroad

against sentences *in contumaciam* were allowed. So many people had disappeared that the Government passed a special law regulating the disposal of their properties (while the succeeding Government found compensation of victims' relatives a serious financial problem).

Bands of fugitives in the mountains, led by the notorious Tomanguelov and others, descended sometimes to friendly villages, killed local oppressors and looted their goods; whereupon police would appear, arrest Agrarians or Communists with their sons and daughters, burn their houses, accuse them of aiding the raiders, thrash and torture them to sign admissions of guilt, then drag them before the courts.

In August 1926 martial law and military censorship were decreed in the Troyan-Plevna district under Colonel Diptchev; then terrorists did their worst in this Agrarian stronghold to prepare for Governmental success at elections. Upon a tiny scale the horrors of September 1923 were repeated and about two hundred people disappeared. Everywhere Democrats, Liberals, Radicals and Socialists suffered this terror hardly less than the now most conciliatory Agrarians, their deputies being arrested and meetings banned upon any pretext or none. The terrorists, aided by volunteers from "patriotic associations" such as General Shkoinov's Fascists (Rodna Zachtita), roved the countryside bombing houses, kidnapping opponents, cracking heads; but if deputies protested Liaptchev would answer that the local authorities "knew nothing of the incident complained of". Opposition newspapers reported outrages almost daily; but if they wrote too vehemently armed men would call upon the editorial staff. Persons reporting the facts abroad were charged with treason. The "Communist menace" was justification for all this terror; fantastic conspiracies were constantly being "discovered", causing the *Near East* to write naïvely that "it would be interesting to know why Communism has proved a plant of hardier growth in Bulgaria than anywhere else in south-eastern Europe". Imprisonment of Agrarian leaders for alleged misappropriation during Stamboliski's regime was another manœuvre to cripple the Opposition, headed now by the Democrat Malinov who courageously denounced "occult forces". Malinov demanded a Coalition to conduct elections: but in vain.

At elections in May (1927) Liaptchev gained only 495,000 votes against 556,000, despite his terror; yet the majority system gave him 163 deputies against the Opposition Bloc's

86 (among a total of 273 seats). Tsar Boris, opening the Sobranié, spoke of "free elections": but the Socialist leader Yanko Sakazov dramatically interrupted and contradicted him, saying the whole nation was indignant at the excesses; whereupon Sakazov and his Opposition colleagues were accused of plotting with Moscow and Belgrade. "Suppression of Communists" won commune elections in February 1928 too.

Exploiting Europe's sympathy with Bulgaria in her alleged Communist troubles, the Liaptchev Government negotiated through the League of Nations Financial Committee the Refugee Settlement (1926) and Stabilisation (1928) Loans. Both were declared unnecessary by many deputies, both were wantonly squandered; this corrupt Government left to their successors in 1931 an empty Treasury, a staggering deficit, a country strangled by parasite industries. Care for foreign financial obligations was a Supremist bribe at the peasants' expense for Europe's goodwill. One wonders why the League's Financial Representative in Bulgaria was so complaisant? The loans were granted upon condition that Bulgaria withdrew all immigrants from her frontiers, but she ignored the condition when she had the loans.

While the Refugee Settlement Loan was being negotiated there were fewer raids into Yugoslavia; but among outrages which did occur was the assassination in Bitolje in July 1926 of a Macedonian newspaper editor whose writings displeased Mihailov.

Towards the end of 1925 a man had walked into Dubrovnik police station and declared himself the notorious voivode Krsta Leonda. He had, he explained, found the Macedonian people against revolutionary strife, so had decided to make his submission. After interrogation he was liberated and went to live in Bitolje where he soon became the Prefect's friend. When the editor was shot Leonda was consulted. He supposed the assassins were Greeks because the dead man had written against the Greeks' treatment of their Slavs. But soon it was found that a local IMRO organisation, working to cause friction between Yugoslavia and Greece (whose good relations displeased Italy), was responsible for the murder. Arrests were made. Then it was discovered that the head of this organisation was none other than the Prefect's friend Leonda! He was shot.

In May 1926 a bomb thrown into a Strumitza café killed or wounded a dozen civilians—to the townsfolk's indignation.

In July a raiding band, surprised near Kriva Palanka, fought a stern action of which *Freedom or Death* published a graphic account, though Sofia declared at first that Yugoslav reports of it were invented to stop the loan negotiations! The comitadjis said they tried not to hit the attacking militia (whose existence could no longer be denied in Sofia) yet killed sixteen of the enemy; but *Politika* wrote that owing to their impregnable position rifle fire was ineffective against them: they repulsed two assaults, then broke through their besiegers' lines by throwing grenades, losing three dead and the Yugoslavs five.

Meantime there had been news of a conference of IMRO leaders and External Representatives with Italians in Rome, then a report that Volkov had conferred with revolutionary leaders at Gorna Djoumaia. So Yugoslavia invited Greek and Roumanian collaboration. Greece was smarting under the Petritch reverse. Roumanian Dobrudja had been raided, whereupon Vlach immigrant fugitives from IMRO persecution in Macedonia had retaliated by killing, in all, forty-seven Bulgar peasants (but Bulgarian agitation against Roumania was never strong—and in 1926 Italy signed a pact with Roumania).

Early in August the three countries called upon Bulgaria to act against raiders in accordance with her agreements and take measures against those responsible. Bulgaria answered that she could not guard her frontiers unless she increased her Army: adding that since IMRO existed only in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria could not possibly control it! However, Foreign Minister Bourov, who (unlike some of his colleagues) disliked terrorist methods and was Francophile for personal reasons, insisted upon conciliatory gestures, so a Macedonian Youth Congress was banned—whereupon there was a furious outcry against him.

Italy, planning to encircle Yugoslavia, concluded in November 1926 a treaty with Albania which finally ruptured Italo-Yugoslav friendly relations; whereupon the National Committee in Sofia redoubled its agitation, raids and outrages were redoubled in South Serbia. Fallen "heroes'" portraits were placarded in Sofia, *Freedom or Death* jubilated at Yugoslav losses. During the second half of 1927 hotels in Kotchani, Gevgheli and Strumitza were bombed (causing many civilian casualties), trains and military depots attacked, public buildings bombed and railways mined, to compromise Bourov's negotiations for better relations with Yugoslavia.

In September two terrorists were sent to blow up the Yugoslav Consulate in Salonika and then the Greek Consulate in Skoplje, but their explosive baggage brought them to execution at Salonika. Though the Greeks took few precautions along their frontier, outrages in Greece were very rare and trivial however.

Then on October 5, 1927, Hippocrate Razvigorov (brother of Mihailov's lieutenant and murderer of two Bulgarian deputies) shot in Shtip General Mihailo Kovatchevitch. Razvigorov and two accomplices were cornered in a cave by peasant militia, one of them caught, Razvigorov and the other shot (though by Bulgarian legend these heroes killed themselves). Yugoslavia closed the frontier and threatened to break off relations with Bulgaria if there were more assassinations; whereupon Mihailov issued a *communiqué* saying this and all other outrages were IMRO's glorious work—and soon contrived to add to them by the assassination of a Yugoslav Colonel at Strumitza. The Yugoslav Press reported twenty arrests in Shtip—Razvigorov's home; but Sofia said hundreds of Macedonians were murdered in retaliation—though *Freedom or Death* could name only seven "killed by the Serbs" in all South Serbia between October 1927 and February 1928. On October 31, however, Mihailov's father and eldest brother were shot in Shtip on their way from a café where they had passed the evening with a Yugoslav gendarme. That they were on such terms with an "oppressor" is interesting. The authorities said the assassins were local inhabitants, but Mihailov declared "King Alexander and the White Hand Society" responsible. It is even less improbable that Mihailov himself instigated the murder so that he might seem a martyr. His mother and sister still live in Shtip!

Meantime the Bulgarian Government, "to prove its sincerity", proclaimed martial law in Petritch and Kustendil Departments on October 10. Actually the assassination of Kovatchevitch gave a pretext for the very measure Volkov and Mihailov wished, though some Ministers certainly hoped direct responsibility would tie Volkov's hand. Mihailov was increasingly unpopular in those Departments, where his friends murdered and robbed; but martial law gave Volkov control and secured Mihailov's supremacy, a house to house search of Kustendil purging that town of his opponents. There were vigorous protests from the Opposition Parties and Federalists who well knew what martial law

meant and from the Mihailovist minority too (against "this servility") for appearances' sake.

The Yugoslavs knew too what it meant—they had *not* suggested it. The difficulty of preventing marauding bands with local guides from crossing a border is notorious; however, the Yugoslavs set about building (at enormous cost) an unbroken barrier of barbed wire entanglements and block-houses from Tsaribrod to the Greek border—the Black Frontier.

Meanwhile nineteen Macedonian students from Zagreb University, charged with espionage, were brought to trial at Skoplje. Poor yet romantic, they had been bribed to enrol in IMRO: then paid salaries, supplied with revolutionary literature and encouraged to enjoy the game of conspiracy until caught in June 1927—as intended, because IMRO wanted martyrs. Their trial (conducted in Balkan style) was an occasion for angry demonstrations in Sofia and lurid articles in the foreign Press by journalists whose integrity falls under grave suspicion. But only nine were condemned; eight of these were amnestied three years later, several of them entering Yugoslav official service!

Among the acquitted was Kyril Karadjitch of Shtip; but he conspired again, so in 1929 he had to fly—the Bulgarian Press hinting the Yugoslavs had murdered him. He went to Italy, whence the Bulgarian Legation sent him—now Karadjov—to Sofia. The National Committee passed him on to Mihailov's men at Gorna Djoumaia, who roundly abused him because he had not murdered the Ban (Governor) of Vardar Banovine, Jika Lazitch. Back in Sofia, without money or work—for IMRO made sure he got none—he was urged to become an assassin; but eventually he fled—to Belgrade! He was pardoned and became Karadjitch again. Much the same befell Dimiter Iliev, Grigor Anastassov (former deputies in the Shkupstina) and Dimiter Shalev (one-time mayor of Skoplje). They were induced to fly from South Serbia; in January 1930 they presented a petition at Geneva on behalf of the "oppressed Bulgarians of Macedonia": and (at the instigation of Mihailov's Geneva Representative, Simeon Eftimov) they wrote that King Alexander had asked them to arrange the assassination of Tsar Boris! Then they went to Sofia; but they were so disillusioned that in 1933 they returned to Belgrade and vituperated against the terrorists.

In 1928 (the Stabilisation Loan year) there were only ten

outrages in Yugoslavia; but two were dramatic.

In 1927 a girl from Sofia opened a hat shop in Skoplje. Her name was Mara Buneva and her shop did well. Born at Tetovo, in Macedonia, she had been well educated by the Exarchate and happily married to a Bulgarian officer; but the Mihailovists somehow induced her to serve The Cause, so she "fled" to Yugoslavia. She made friends readily, among them the lawyer Velimir Prelitch whose investigations had brought the Macedonian students to trial.

At midday on January 13, 1928, Mara closed her shop. She went to the bridge over the Vardar where she would meet Prelitch on his way to lunch. She stopped him, then pulled a revolver from her blouse and fired. Prelitch fell, mortally wounded. Then Mara shot herself. "I am sorry I had to kill Prelitch," said the poor girl before she died, "because he helped me several times." A Sofia suburb was re-named after her and her portrait carried in procession through the streets.

On July 12 a Macedonian tradesman called at the Ministry of Interior in Belgrade with a petition for Jika Lazitch, now Director of Public Security. Lazitch received him and began to read the petition; whereupon the "tradesman", Ivan Momtchilov, drew a revolver and fired four shots. Lazitch, wounded, dropped behind his desk. The assassin, thinking his mission accomplished, shot himself too—and Sofia was plastered with his obituary notices. Mihailov had promised to pay 500,000 *leva* to Momtchilov's destitute mother in Bulgaria if he killed Lazitch.

Mihailov told that Momtchilov had been sent from Macedonia by Lazitch to kill him, but confessed and agreed to kill Lazitch instead: so the rumour was spread that Mihailov had been assassinated and Momtchilov was received by Lazitch as a hero! Actually this seems a clever inversion of facts. Momtchilov had received a letter telling him to act quickly—for Mihailov urgently wanted a diversion; nor was it Mihailov's assassination that the Press reported! Lazitch (afterwards Minister of Interior) told me that possibly one of his subordinates had sent Momtchilov to kill Mihailov but he had never heard so. A charming old gentleman who had worked hard to improve the administration of South Serbia, Lazitch was extremely popular among the people—which is precisely why no man was more blackened in Sofia than he, it being said "this tyrant" dared not show himself in public. (It was in this same

spirit that a wild outburst against Yugoslavia was engineered because she temporarily re-opened her frontier and contributed 3,000,000 *dinars* for the relief of "our Bulgarian brothers" when in April 1928, earthquakes wrecked Plovdiv, Chirpan and many villages of southern Bulgaria with considerable loss of life.)

After these and other outrages the British and French Ministers in Sofia demanded the dissolution of IMRO, a *démarche* described by Liaptchev as "interference with Bulgaria's internal affairs". But there were the Loan negotiations to consider; so some Macedonians, Mihailov's critics and immigrants slow to pay his "taxes", were interned—a common farce to which Mihailov played up by protesting.

But such outrages provoked growing disgust among decent Bulgarians whose suppressed will for understanding with Yugoslavia was much stimulated when the Slovene leader Korochetz visited Sofia. Tsankov muttered angrily against Volkov, murmuring that the Tsar planned "fresh adventures" with him and had tied Bulgaria to Italy; and indeed Princess Giovanna of Savoy was Tsar Boris' price: though Volkov's was more ordinary, his corruption being notorious. In January 1928 Kazazov had begun to publish the weekly *Zveno*; it called non-party idealists to work for national renovation under an authoritative government and semi-corporative *Sobranié*, protecting the productive masses and conducting a sane foreign policy: and it made history by boldly inveighing against terrorism, calling for proper Governmental authority in Petritch Department. *Zveno* was encouraged by Tsankov, Kalfov, Roussev and Petar Todorov among the politicians and by many officers of the dissolved League. Moreover Protogerov, Parlitchev, Bajdarov and others sympathised: thinking now that the Macedonian Question might best be solved by friendship between the two Slav nations and acceptance of the territorial *status quo*, while IMRO worked *inside* Yugoslavia for Macedonian self-government.

Then on March 1 came a one-man revolt within the Cabinet. Kimon Georghiev, constantly ignored by his colleagues, had tried in vain to maintain public decency; now he threw up his comfortable Ministry (a sensational precedent) and resigned in disgust. "It is scandalous", he declared, "that the State should show partiality in its treatment of the people . . . the sense of justice is being

blunted." Georghiev became leader of a group upholding the precepts of *Zveno*.

And now there began a struggle between those who believed in moderation and decency and those who held by terrorism and corruption: between those who wished for a reconditioned democracy and sane foreign policy and those inspired by the doctrines and policies of Italy, Hungary and Nazi Germany. The first victim in this struggle was Protogerov.

At 11.30 p.m. on July 7, 1928, General Protogerov and his guard were shot from behind as they passed a lamp-post near Protogerov's house in Sofia. Captain Kutzarov and Kyril Drangov directed the three assassins who were afterwards rushed away to Gorna Djoumaia in a War Office car.

Then the Press published a *communiqué* from Mihailov: "The last Congress of IMRO instructed the Central Committee to find and execute all those guilty of Todor Alexandrov's assassination. Alexander Protogerov was killed in accordance with these instructions, other high interests of the Macedonian Cause making this punishment very urgent." In September he said further (to the German Official Newsagency's Correspondent) that "if I had let Protogerov live he would have killed me . . . I have warned the Government that if it molests the Organisation I will proclaim Sofia a war zone and make it a place of flames"! Brave words from the War Minister's assassin-in-chief! Alexandrov had been killed with the connivance of Tsankov and the Bulgarian "Serbophiles", he added!

Mihailov sought to justify this crime by numerous impossible arguments, having a whole book of fiction published—*Why Alexander Protogerov Was Killed*—containing 44 facsimiles of which only twenty-two (entirely irrelevant) bear date or signature! He called Protogerov "an old and vindictive criminal . . . a hollow-brained old ninny": for Mihailov's invective was choice; his retort to the suggestion that he was too young to control IMRO was: "Jesus Christ died at 33": adding that all the best assassins were young men! To "prove" Protogerov's guilt he produced "evidence" forged over the murdered Penkov's signature, and bore a particular grudge against PopTodorov and Pando Strumitchki who (having interrogated Penkov) knew it was forged. He pretended Protogerov had carried off Alexandrov's despatch case and destroyed it (fearing the

contents would compromise him); whereas the muleteers told where they themselves had hidden it, it was recovered, then the contents examined and filed; it contained nothing compromising Protogerov, and Mihailov only spun this yarn when he himself had seized those "missing archives"!

Protogerov was buried in Sofia with impressive military honours which Volkov, who had discreetly gone abroad, dared not withhold. A distinguished General treacherously shot in the capital! Senior officers made angry speeches, 10,000 people walked in the funeral procession. Founder and Grand Master of the Bulgarian Freemasons' Grand Lodge, Protogerov died a poor man (for he gave generously to charities); with him died the last of IMRO's influence beyond Bulgaria's frontiers. His death marked the final rupture between revolutionaries and assassins. The police warned the Press not to comment upon the murder, but several papers ignored them and earned menacing letters from Mihailov.

There had been an attempt to kill Protogerov on September 29, 1927; it was to have been "the work of Communists or traitors"—possibly the assassination of General Kovatchevitch had been planned as a diversion. While driving near Petritch, Protogerov heard firing behind him and learnt that the car in which he generally travelled had been held up by men who asked for him. The attackers were caught. Protogerov ordered Giurkov to interrogate them; but when he asked for the result he was told the leaders had "committed suicide" (but they lived to murder Protogerov's friends). Suspicious, he telephoned from Sofia that he would go himself next day to interrogate the survivors; but next day he learnt that they had been hanged, by telephoned order from Mihailov.

For months Mihailov had been scarcely upon speaking terms with Protogerov, PopChristov, or the External Representatives. His promiscuous murders violated the Statutes, which stipulated that nobody might be executed without the consent of all the members of the Central Committee. Then there were revelations of his occult role in 1923 and 1925. He had made the Macedonian Students' Union a terrorist body: closed Petritch Department (having cars searched and correspondence examined): openly supported Liaptchev during the elections: worked to subordinate IMRO to Volkov in Italy's interest.

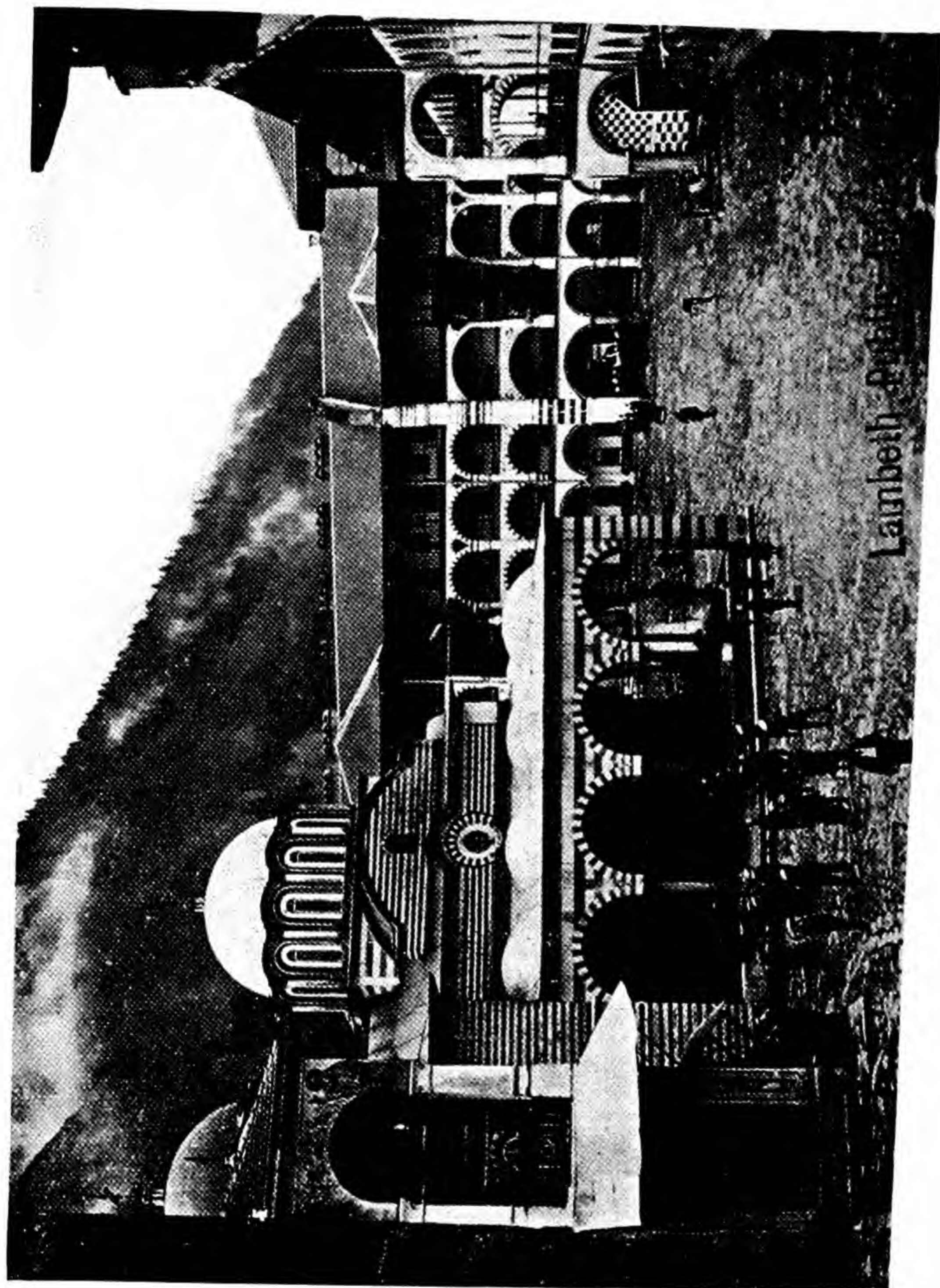
In 1927 further discussions in Rome seemed necessary.

Mihailov wished to go: but Protogerov went. He returned indignant. The Italians had proposed Macedonian autonomy under their protection—but not all Macedonia, for they had given pledges to King Zog; indeed it was believed Italy had secretly promised Albania a common frontier with Bulgaria! To Protogerov it was now clear that unless the Macedonians came to terms with the Yugoslavs their country would be partitioned.

Thereupon Mihailov went to Rome, with his wife, in December; he told nobody until the eve of his departure, then said to External Representatives that he went to buy arms: adding that he could no longer work with Protogerov whose place must be taken by Drangov, Razvigorov or Kourtev—he would have neither Shandanov nor Giurkov.

The VII Revolutionary Congress, repeatedly postponed, had been fixed for February; but since Mihailov only returned on February 20 the High Council's preliminary conference took place only on March 6. Nine persons assembled with their bodyguards at a private house in Sofia. The atmosphere was tense. Everyone's bodyguards sat with drawn revolvers; this so shocked their hostess that she said she could not let them hold any more meetings at her house! Mihailov would not agree upon a date for the Congress; moreover he insisted that Protogerov's and PopChristov's districts should send only eighteen instead of the normal thirty-one delegates because they had been inactive. The others gave way to him in this, also to his demand that the "legal" External Representatives should be answerable henceforth to the "illegal" Central Committee.

But a week later Mihailov demanded the abolition of External Representatives: contending that since IMRO was now based upon "liberated" territory and charged with "counter-espionage against the Serbs", they were superfluous as intermediaries with the immigrants, nor were their financial control and representative functions necessary; the Statutes must be changed—the Central Committee must have absolute power and dwell in Petritch Department: though the Organisation would still be "Internal" since Petritch Department was Macedonian! The others would not agree. Thereupon Mihailov broke off relations with them. He planned to have at the Congress a majority who would elect a Central Committee of his choosing: gain absolute power: annul the rule that anyone who had not for a year served in "revolutionary territory" lost all



Lambeth - Rila - Rila

Rila Monastery.

authority (because neither he nor his young lieutenants had ever crossed into South Serbia): establish IMRO's headquarters in security, under Volkov's sway for Volkov's ends.

Realising his aims, his opponents stiffened. Protogerov and PopChristov withdrew their conciliatory acceptance of his demands on March 6, saying all these matters must be decided by the Congress.

On March 14 Protogerov had written broken-heartedly to the High Council complaining that there was no mutual confidence, saying he would resign to prevent a split. The High Council thought to let the reserve member Shandanov (now in South Serbia) automatically replace him, but Mihailov would not have Shandanov; whereupon the matter was deferred, Protogerov saying he would remain upon the Committee until he had reported to the Congress. Then Protogerov wrote warning Mihailov he would bring charges against him at the Congress. This scared Mihailov, who played for time while secretly removing IMRO's stores, seals, funds and certain archives to Petritch Department; and thither he went himself too. Then he wrote cunningly on July 2 to the High Council saying quarrels were destroying IMRO: the Congress should meet immediately: he would withdraw from the Committee. Protogerov and PopChristov sent a conciliatory reply next day, but Mihailov pretended afterwards that he only received it on July 8—the day after Protogerov fell!

That is the known story. But there is more. Returning from Italy, Mihailov had asked Shandanov and others to join in the assassination of Tsankov, Roussev, Kalfov and other politicians of like opinions, "because they were republicans plotting against the Government, traitors a hundred times worse than Stamboliski, agents of Serbia and Greece who plotted against IMRO and the freedom of Bulgaria!" A massacre of Slavophiles by Italophiles, a plot hatched in Rome! Shandanov, for one, categorically refused, warning his colleagues who took steps to prevent any such thing (See *Makedonska Pravda*, 10/12/33). Then on May 6 *Politika* reported that IMRO chiefs in Sofia had decided to suspend revolutionary activities; moreover Protogerov had arranged (wrote Kosta Todorov) to meet the Yugoslav Minister to Bulgaria at Rila on July 8. Add to this the unconcealed support Mihailov always had from Italian, Hungarian and German journalists in Sofia and the story is complete!

Immediately Protogerov was out of the way Mihailov assembled his friends, then formally invited PopChristov and the External Representatives to his Congress; but since Mihailov's friends had "neither legal nor moral standing" the others declined, likewise all Bitolje, Salonika and Strumitza delegates. So Mihailov held a "Congress" of nineteen picked assassins (though forty-three elected revolutionaries was regular); he delicately withdrew while the others voted thanks to him for his courage (under his wife's eye, for she stayed in the room) and elected him with Karadjov and Razvigorov to the Central Committee! Kyril Drangov became "Point Chief" in Sofia, Yordan Tchkatrov "legal" Representative. A Mihailovist *Freedom or Death* appeared—so for a time two revolutionary papers bore this name.

Under Stamboliski, Petritch Department had freely elected four Agrarian deputies, three Communists and one Democrat; but under Tsankov's Government, to give grounds for an agitation for the same in South Serbia, a National Macedonian Parliamentary Group (eventually increased by Liaptchev to eleven deputies) had been nominated. Upon Protogerov's death the Group unanimously delegated Karandjoulov to demand the arrest of the assassins. Karandjoulov saw Liaptchev; then he told his colleagues he would do nothing further because the Government condoned the murder: Liaptchev had told him those who disobeyed it met this fate (evidently referring to Protogerov's overtures to Yugoslavia). Thereupon four of the Macedonian deputies accused their colleagues of condoning Protogerov's assassination; headed by Georghi Koulichev they went to Liaptchev.

"Do you expect me to arrest Mihailov in the mountains?" asked Liaptchev.

"It would be enough for the present if you had the assassins arrested. Their names are Dimiter Stefanov, Dimiter Djushdana and Nantcho Vetlarov; they are at Gorna Djoumaia, which is under martial law."

Liaptchev merely shrugged. He could do nothing, he said!

With so much Governmental connivance Mihailov had managed to have a (Macedonian immigrants') National Committee elected which supported him, its secretary being (significantly) Velko Doumev who had represented Adrianople vilayet upon the Supremist Committee of pre-War days! Under Doctor Alexander Stanichev this Committee now pretended neutrality, though forbidding its

organs to publish Protogerov's biography or the immigrants to hold a memorial service. Koulichev (editing *Makedonia*) was reprimanded for writing against the crime.

Philip Athanassov and Dimiter Vlahov had no part in the origins of the feud now beginning between Protogerovists and Mihailovists. In 1925 they had split, Vlahov declaring for a Federation of Balkan Socialist Republics; so Athanassov had ordered his followers to disband. But Athanassov's followers sympathised with Protogerov's and gradually joined them against the Mihailovists, though preserving an independent Central Committee. In September 1929 they held a congress in Istanbul and denounced Vlahov. Between 1921 and 1930 they lost over six hundred killed by Supremists; Athanassov himself—when he did venture back to Sofia—never stirred without half a dozen bodyguards. An attempt upon Athanassov and Ivanov at Vienna in December 1926 was frustrated and their assailant imprisoned.

In October 1925 Vlahov, at Vienna, had rallied his friends (among them Shatev and Zankov—who had escaped massacre) and founded the *United (Obidinena) IMRO* with *Federation Balkanique* and *Makedonsko Delo* as organs; they claimed they followed the Vienna Manifesto. But in 1928 Vlahov, who wished to work with the re-forming Bulgarian Communist Party, expelled Shatev and Zankov who were "too nationalist"; his group became almost Communist but exclusively Macedonian. Some *Obidinenists* were arrested at Kumanovo and Veles in 1927: and in 1929 over a hundred more, throughout South Serbia—though they were leniently treated because they disapproved of terrorism. Mihailov's terror drove many peasants in Petritch Department to join IMRO, while the Popular Students' Group at Sofia University was re-formed in 1929 (publishing *Makedonsko Zname*).

After Protogerov's death the External Representatives declared his place automatically filled by Shandanov, a well-educated man born at Okhrid in 1895; he and PopChristov should carry on until the next congress was possible, though Krstan PopTodorov unofficially filled Mihailov's place upon their Central Committee. Mihailov, repudiated by them, condemned them to death! However, they decreed that there should be no vengeance nor aggression against Mihailovists. They enjoined strict discipline upon their men, forbidding drunkenness, the bearing of arms unless issued by group chiefs, or discussion of IMRO affairs in

public: recalling that revolutionaries must reserve their strength to fight Serbs and Greeks and remember they were guests in Bulgaria. All the foremost surviving revolutionaries rallied to them, except some from Bulgarised eastern Macedonia—indeed the feud which followed was a civil war between Bulgarised Macedonian immigrants and those of independent views.

Mihailov began it—he wanted no opposition congress! On July 31 a Protogerovist was attacked in Sofia but the aggressors were delivered to the police; meanwhile Pando Strumitchki was ambushed and killed in Petritch Department on July 25 by a band under Nastev.

Accounts of Protogerov's death soon trickled into Petritch Department, causing fierce indignation. The people were warned that Mihailov had Volkov's support. But certain voivodi showed signs of rebellion, whereupon picked militiamen were mobilised to "hunt Yugoslav bands". Foremost among the rebels was Deltchev's old follower Dimachev. Gathering a strong band he fought several sharp engagements; called upon to surrender "in the name of Mihailov, Governor of Macedonia", his men replied: "In the name of Macedonia you must commit suicide." But at last Dimachev and four followers were surrounded. For a day they defended themselves, then escaped in darkness. Two were sheltered by an officer. Dimachev and the others fled towards Samokov; but they were caught there by police, handed over to militia pursuing them in military lorries, executed on the spot. Liaptchev personally congratulated the police. Villagers who had sheltered Dimachev were killed in batches by terrorists—two were dragged from a train. Dimachev was buried in Sofia, his funeral becoming an angry demonstration against the National Committee. Izvorski had spontaneously led eight men from Sofia against Mihailov, but they were betrayed by Captain Kotcho Stoyanov and surrendered on promise of their lives; whereupon Mihailov personally helped to torture and butcher them. Stanoiev, another hero of the Greek invasion, had a like fate.

There followed a reign of terror in Petritch Department whence many fled to Yugoslavia or other parts of Bulgaria, appealing repeatedly but in vain for the Government's protection. Their relatives suffered for such appeals. Garrison commanders there, Volkov's men, did not conceal their intimacy with Mihailov; but many officers detested his

gangsters and protected fugitives when they could. The Department Police Chief begged for authority to suppress Mihailov's band (saying he needed no reinforcements, since the Mihailovists were few); but Liaptchev ordered him to "leave that question—it is too difficult". In October a commanding officer complained to the War Office, asking his superior: "Why don't you order the suppression of these bandits?" He was told he had better hold his tongue or the War Minister would dismiss him. Tsankov and Bourov were menaced for daring to protest. But during 1929 troops under anti-Volkovist officers once fired upon Mihailovists, while a Bulgarian frontier post near Trn disarmed a band trying to cross the border—thus fulfilling formal orders meant to be ignored!

All decent officers had been repeatedly and increasingly shocked by Volkov's excesses which he could no longer disguise as "Macedonian work": and they were astounded that Tsar Boris should support this monster. These officers, having views in common, hung together round the old leader of their dissolved League (General Lazarov) and the forceful Colonel Veltchev, who had survived Volkov's "purge" in 1926. They did not, however, hide their contempt for Volkov and all his works. After Protogerov fell they let forth a howl of indignation, clamouring now for Volkov's dismissal, Veltchev being foremost in declaring him a butcher and rascal.

Early in August the British and French Ministers in Sofia called for serious measures against IMRO and the arrest of its leaders, pointing out that since the revolutionaries were split the Government's plea that it was invincible was no longer acceptable. With this *démarche* the Italian Minister declined to associate himself, saying that since Italy was "confident that the Bulgarian Government will take, of its own initiative, all the measures which the situation demands", he preferred not to "complicate the situation by an inopportune intervention"! But Foreign Minister Bourov, backed by Tsankov, declared nothing could be done to comply with it while Volkov remained in the Cabinet, since he thwarted all measures against IMRO. The internal situation now became critical. Volkov hurriedly returned from abroad and flatly declined to "satisfy England and France" by resigning: adding that Bourov's accusations were fine proof that revolutionary activities were conducted from Bulgaria! At celebrations upon Shipka

Pass on August 26 Tsar Boris warned officers to avoid "pernicious influences"; while Minister Grigor Vassilev (Tchkatrov's friend) spread the tale that Tsankov, Roussev and Veltchev had organised a *coup d'état* early in July—though why there had been no coup he did not say!

No revolutionaries were arrested; but the *démarche* served as pretext for transferring from Petritch Department all senior officials who did not support the Volkov-Liaptchev-Mihailov combine—officially because they were not severe enough against IMRO! And then Lazarov and Veltchev were summarily pensioned—Lazarov "because he was very old", Veltchev for no reason at all. Their dismissal, Volkov told the Press, was by order "from above, in fulfilment of a definite programme drawn up almost with dates". So Tsar Boris had deliberately ordered their dismissal!

Veltchev was dismissed on September 3, 1928. After conferring with certain deputies (his partisans) Volkov told the Sofia Garrison Commander to dismiss Veltchev; but the Garrison Commander, Veltchev's immediate superior, objected that by regulations he could be dismissed only through the Army Council. Thereupon Volkov took to the Palace a *ukase* dismissing Veltchev which the Tsar immediately signed, ignoring military regulations and procedure! Colonel Marinkov took Veltchev's place at the Military College. Veltchev asked the War Minister for the customary explanations but got no reply; so he retired to his home, put up a lawyer's name-plate, then rallied behind the Zveno Group while remaining the centre of military opposition to the Volkovists. And as that opposition grew, so grew Veltchev's power.

Seeing that Volkov would not resign two other Ministers did so, forcing Liaptchev to hand his depleted Cabinet's resignation to the Tsar on September 5; whereupon Volkov declared that he personally had not resigned and got seventy-two deputies (Liaptchev's followers) to protest against this "attempt to drag the War Minister into politics": they added that the War Minister's appointment or resignation depended only upon the Tsar and they would support no Cabinet in which Volkov had no place. There was a crisis. The Tsar, ignoring the Opposition leaders' suggestion that Malinov should form a National Union Government, invited Liaptchev to re-form his Cabinet with Volkov: though Volkov would resign in his own time.

Having made sure his successor, Bakardjiev, would carry on his methods, Butcher Volkov resigned in January 1929, an attempt to save himself by another Communist scare having fizzled out. Tsar Boris appointed him Minister in Rome. At a banquet in his honour in November 1930 the deputy Todor Kojoukharov, proposing his health, said Volkov's name was associated with many happy days for the Bulgarian people!

CHAPTER IX

BULGARIA'S DREYFUS CASE

POP TODOROV had written that Mihailov was a "miserable cowardly fratricide who doesn't know where Macedonia is because he cannot go there in a car. . . . He careers about condemning people to death and has threatened to cut my body into six hundred pieces. I am ready to meet him anywhere alone to let him try—but doubtless he will send his miserable hirelings to kill me as they killed others." Seven days later, with the approval of the War Office and the National Committee, Mihailov sent his hirelings.

POP TODOROV and PETZO TRAIKOV were playing tric-trac in the Phoenix Café one October day in 1928. They thought themselves safe here, in the heart of Sofia, with trams rumbling past and police on point duty close by. Three men with hands in pockets sauntered in; suddenly they drew revolvers and blazed away. But POP TODOROV and TRAIKOV, though wounded, were quick on the draw. The leading assassin fell, riddled. But stray bullets killed an innocent pedestrian and wounded five others, among them the Turkish Military Attaché. Captains KUTZAROV and TOCHEV were spectators from across the street; moreover the dead assassin had been drinking with Major STOYANOV earlier in the day. The police inspector DRAGANOV hid the dead man's empty parabellum, then said an unfired revolver (his reserve) found upon him proved him the victim of aggression: so POP TODOROV and TRAIKOV were arrested; but the Prosecutor discovered the facts and they were liberated. Nobody was punished—the surviving assassins had alibis! Most of the Press was mute. A few days later Major STOYANOV called to LEF GLAVINCHEV, in a restaurant, that IMRO must be a section of the War Office—those who disagreed would be killed.

On November 21 Naoum Belev, President of the Okhrid (Protogerov's) brotherhood and former Director of State Security, was shot in Sofia. He had embarrassed the

National Committee by pressing for a clear explanation of Protogerov's death. Belev's assassin was released "for want of evidence", so Mihailov declared the murder "Serbian work"; but thereafter most immigrants from western Macedonia declined to associate with the National Committee.

And so Mihailov murdered the old Macedonian leaders; they retaliated at first only against their actual assailants. Mihailov's murders make a gruesomely monotonous catalogue of which I mention only those of significance; soon they averaged one a week, then gradually increased to one a day (apart from those in Petritch Department).

The unrest in Yugoslavia which followed the shooting of Stepan Raditch in the Shkupstina on June 20, 1928, led to the proclamation of a Dictatorship by King Alexander on January 6, 1929. He was anxious for better relations with Bulgaria, so the frontier was reopened and the Pirot Convention negotiated during March. This Convention provided for liquidation of properties split by the frontier: withdrawal of immigrants from frontier zones: a permanent Mixed Commission to settle frontier incidents. Simultaneously, Yugoslavia concluded a fresh pact of friendship with Greece (settling control of the Gevghele-Salonika railway). Thereupon Italy (and Hungary) promoted conspiracy between the Croat terrorist organisation *Ustacha* and the Mihailovists.

The *Ustacha* had evolved from the Franckist Party founded around 1890 by the Croatian Jew Josep Franck to counteract, in the interests of Austria-Hungary, the movement for Yugoslav unity. With generous Italian, Hungarian and Austrian "legitimist" support it revived after the War under former Austro-Hungarian officers. Raditch had roundly denounced its treason. In January 1929 its leaders fled from Zagreb to Vienna; chief among them were the former Austro-Hungarian Colonels Pertchevitch and Pertchetz and the lawyer Anté Pavelitch. In April Pavelitch and Pertchevitch came to co-ordinate plans with Mihailov. They were ceremoniously received and feasted by the National Committee, Sofia was placarded with anti-Yugoslav proclamations, the Press published inflammatory articles; then they went to Petritch Department (under martial law) where, amid more banquets and speeches, they drew up (and published) an agreement for joint terrorist activities to "liberate" Croatia and Macedonia. In vain Yugoslavia protested that political fugitives from Bulgaria were

never permitted to act thus upon her soil.

Soon the Croat leaders organised several explosions in Belgrade, bombs hidden in railway coaches blew up travellers to Yugoslavia; whereupon they were turned out of Austria. Pavelitch (the Supreme Chiet) went to benevolent Italy whence he conducted a frantic propaganda against Yugoslavia; Pertchetz rented a farm at Janka Puszta in Hungary close to the Yugoslav border (for Croatia and Slovenia had been *Hungarian* territory until 1918). There were criminals or fugitives enough from Yugoslavia to fill a dozen terrorist training "camps" in Italy and Hungary. At Janka Puszta, the main centre, with Hungarian authorities' connivance, assassins were trained under severe discipline: effigies of King Alexander being used for target practice.

During the summer of 1929 Mihailov's terrorists (often crossing the frontier like ordinary travellers) redoubled their outrages in South Serbia near the border, effectively chilling relations between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. There were many attempts to blow up trains and railways: many shots exchanged between Bulgarian and Yugoslav frontier patrols: a frontier blockhouse bombed: a Moslem Yugoslav riddled with bullets by assassins disguised as veiled Moslem women. In November a time bomb derailed the luggage van of the Orient Express near Tsaribrod, but a Yugoslav patrol repulsed an attack upon the train and removed other bombs from the line. Yugoslavia protested sharply but Gorna Djoumaia and Petritch were beflagged; then another bomb exploded in a train near Pirot, wounding six passengers.

The Bulgarian Government invariably denied that raiders ever crossed from Bulgarian territory: pretending these outrages were committed by "oppressed Macedonians", while pressing at Geneva for their recognition as a "Bulgarian Minority". Italian agents added to this racket by inflammatory speeches at meetings near the frontier, the Bulgarian Press told wild tales of persecution and murder in West Frontier Territory. The *Near East* unintentionally encouraged outrages by writing that they proved the frontier populations discontented and their continuance "must sooner or later rouse public opinion in Europe" to realise the necessity for frontier revision in Bulgaria's favour!

Meanwhile PopChristov, Shandanov, PopTodorov, Petzo Traikov and others had gone through Albania into western

Macedonia to organise a congress. But in July (1929) Shandanov's band was heavily engaged. Pursued by gendarmes they stood at bay in a monastery near Smilevo for several hours, then broke away to a forest in the darkness. Not long afterwards PopChristov's band betrayed themselves by asking for bread and PopChristov, wounded, was barely saved by his men's courage. The National Committee forbade immigrants to read the Protogerovist paper *Vardar* which told of these fights! However, the old leaders had found that though they still had partisans in Macedonia, particularly among the Slavs in Greece, these were too few and disinclined for revolutionary work. So these were IMRO's last fights and the leaders returned to hold their Congress in Sofia. All that followed was Mihailovist provocation.

In October 1929 a band of outlaws in Bulgaria led by Dotcho Ouzounov held up four judges of the Sevlievo District Court, murdered three of them and left upon their bodies a note saying the murderers would struggle unceasingly to defend peasants and workmen against the reactionary regime. This band had committed several outrages, vengeance for barbarous persecution. Ouzounov's tale was told in the Sobranié by a Government deputy.

Accused of Agrarian leanings by a tortured prisoner, Ouzounov (though a declared Tsankovist) had been brutally dragged from police station to police station until acquitted at Lovetch in January 1926. He vowed that if again wrongfully accused he would take to the mountains and prey upon his oppressors. Six months later he was dragged from his home by police but escaped dramatically and roamed the neighbourhood, begging friends to organise his defence. But who dared defend him against police terrorists? Then his two brothers were murdered without trial and his old father maltreated. Mad with grief, Ouzounov fled to Yugoslavia for the winter. In vain he hoped for better days and justice. At last, vowing vengeance, he returned to Bulgaria, a ferocious and redoubtable bandit. Italophile officials (ignoring their own failure to catch Ouzounov) declared the Yugoslavs had sent him and others to blow up bridges and kill Ministers. At last he fled to France and is believed to have died in 1933.

Italy marked her disapproval of Bourov's negotiations with Yugoslavia by supporting Greece against Bulgaria during a financial dispute; then the Italian Minister Piacen-

tini caused a Bulgarian paper to publish an article urging Bulgaria to disavow her Foreign Minister's Francophile policy (an indiscretion for which Piacentini was recalled); however, Mussolini declared that "the sympathies and full support of Italy remain invariably faithful to the Bulgarian people".

But despite outrages and Italian interference and Bulgarian truculence the Pirot Convention was eventually ratified on February 14, 1930. Mihailov lost no time in trying to prevent its application however. On March 3 a bomb thrown into a Pirot café killed or wounded twenty-seven people—and another bomb fifteen more in a Strumitza café. On March 29 Assen Nikolov left in the Belgrade War Office entrance hall a suitcase which exploded, killing two people. And so on. Mihailov freely admitted responsibility in his *Freedom or Death* (published in Sofia) and foretold the destruction of the Shkupstina. The Yugoslav Minister in Sofia protested, supported by his British, French and (for discretion's sake) Italian colleagues; while the Mixed (Bulgaro-Yugoslav) Frontier Commission, confronted with irrefutable evidence that the assassins came from Bulgaria, signed a protocol calling upon the Bulgarian Government to take action. This protocol caused tremendous annoyance in Sofia because Liaptchev, at Bourov's and Tsankov's insistence, had to do something—he banned the Protogerovist newspapers which had denounced these outrages and interned some Protogerovists! Mihailov paid a hurried visit to Rome: then more bombs went off (in Nish station); thereupon more innocent immigrants were arrested in Bulgaria—Mihailov making realistic protests and certain foreign journalists making the most of these (temporary) arrests for effect in western Europe!

Chief among Mihailov's victims in 1929 was Georghi Bajdarov who was killed with his bodyguard on September 19. He had written a pamphlet saying the terror in Petritch Department was worse than in South Serbia! In June two innocent tailors had been mistaken for him and his guard and shot. His assassins were brother and brother-in-law of Vassil Vassilev, secretary of the National Committee—so "how can they be murderers?" asked the Mihailovists furiously; whereupon the police released them! So the Protogerovists, retaliating at last, attacked Vassil Vassilev and a companion in Sofia, seriously wounding both. The National Committee's organ *Makedonia*, which had barely mentioned Bajdarov's death, devoted angry columns to this

attack: of which the gruesome sequel was the murder of their alleged assailant in a cellar beneath a Sofia cinema; whereupon a Mihailovist was shot: and so the vendetta began.

Bajdarov's death had startling consequences. He left correspondence, which his colleagues published. On June 8 (1929) he had written that Mihailov had condemned him, Parlitchev, Tsankov and Veltchev to death. "The bandits want to make out that we are plotting with Tsankov and Veltchev against them . . . we have nothing to do with Tsankov and I don't know Veltchev."

What followed is told in a celebrated open letter addressed by Veltchev to the War Minister (Bakardjiev) and published in *Lutch* on October 22, 1929. Copies were sent to all Sofia newspapers.

"I feel sure," it ran, "that you know of the letter left by Georghi Bajdarov—killed in Varna—in which, among other things, it was said I was to be killed by Ivan Mihailov.

"Having absolutely nothing in common with the Macedonian Organisation, nor anything to do with the strife which has burst forth in its ranks, I read this letter (published in the Press) with great surprise but attached no importance to it.

"On the 18th of this month, however, I was warned from a very reliable and disinterested source to beware, because the decision to murder me had been made. This fresh fact led me to conclude that if really I had been put upon the list of those to be murdered, this decision could not have been taken by Macedonian circles with which I have no ideas in common nor personal contacts nor conflicts, but to satisfy or at the desire of *another place*.

"On the 20th I was again warned that my house was being watched. Then on the 21st, the following incident added itself to these warnings:

"In the evening an officer was visiting me. At 7.30 he left. After ten to fifteen minutes he hurried back, much agitated, to say two individuals had been walking up and down outside, watching: but, on seeing him, had tried to make off and hide themselves. He had managed to overtake one of them and found it was Lieut.-Colonel Porkov, who works in your Ministry. In answer to the officer's question as to what he sought near my house Porkov, confused, gave no reply and hurried away.

"I know very well indeed who this Lieut.-Colonel Porkov is and with what he occupies himself. Once before, while General Volkov was War Minister, he watched my house. I have very serious reasons to believe that this time Porkov's purpose was not merely to observe, because he had with him another individual. I do not know under whose orders he spied upon me in the dark, but in any case he is your subordinate and therefore I address myself to you.

"In a letter in February last I asked you to tell me, in accordance with Army Regulations, the reasons for my dismissal, but you ignored my request. Whether this present letter of mine will have the same fate I do not know. In any case you are responsible before the Army and the Public for what has happened or may happen.

"So far as I am concerned in this matter my personal fate is of less importance than the fact that a regime exists which allows, for one purpose or another, not only the destruction of the established hierarchy in the Army, but also the lives of its former servants to be threatened.

"I believe you are aware that after I was dismissed from the Army without reason, attempts were made and are still being made from a responsible official place to sever my personal relations with my former friends, though no human law controls such relations. Must it be concluded that after these attempts to sever these relations failed, another means of stopping them was sought? This reflects credit upon nobody and augurs no good for the future.

"DAMIAN VELTCHEV,
"Lieut.-Colonel, Rtd."

So it was clear! At the will of Italophile Volkovists of the Army High Command (or of "another place") Mihailov condemned men of opposite views to death and detailed assassins to kill them: then the victims were pointed out to the assassins by officers of Volkov's mafia! There was a howl of angry comment by the National-Conservative *Mir*, and by Radical, Socialist and Agrarian organs too; *Zveno* wrote that the State was given over to irresponsible factors and conspirative groups planting the Macedonian flag upon their victims' corpses—for these murders were always called "Macedonian".

In March 1930 Porkov (Director of Intelligence at the War Office) brought a libel action against Veltchev, who was defended by six distinguished lawyers (among them



TSAR BORIS OF BULGARIA.

Alexander Girghinov): while Generals Lazarov and Stoyanov, Petar Todorov, and the Sofia District Governor Vassil Karakoulakov were among his witnesses. The case was heard *in camera*; Porkov lost it, notwithstanding his lawyer Grigor Vassilev's eloquence and Veltchev's refusal to drag in "State institutions". The verdict was that Veltchev had every reason to suppose Porkov had waited to point him out to an assassin, though this could not be proved.

Veltchev scorned any special precautions after this affair, though friends slept in turn at his house. But Tsankov was more careful—he never stirred without four or five guards who walked the streets like a section in diamond formation; neither was it wise to take one's hand from one's pocket suddenly when near him, nor when near other statesmen who followed Tsankov's example. Tsankov's house was like a barracks; he bought a police dog too. Calling upon him once, I asked his guards whether the dog must come into his study with me. The answer was a suspicious glare—and the dog walked ahead, then sat watching me intently throughout the interview. I kept my hands clasped before me!

At the Macedonian Immigrants' Congress in November 1929 delegates had been forbidden to speak of the feud because the National Committee was "unconnected with IMRO"; moreover they sat beneath "the shadow of the parabellum": a substantial shadow which obliterated twenty-eight persons in Sofia during 1929, while there were 138 attempted assassinations. To April 1930 there were fifty-three killed and twelve wounded in the feud (apart from "disappearances" in Petritch Department). In October 1929 the National Committee had dismissed the editors of *Makedonia*, Koulichev and Pundev, who had defied it by writing against the murders; thenceforward, *Makedonia* openly backed Mihailov. The Protogerovists published papers of their own (though finding it hard at first to find printers or newsvendors bold enough to print and distribute them) and dropped the name *Freedom or Death* for their revolutionary paper, which became *Revolutionary Sheet*.

During a reception at the end of 1930 Tsar Boris told Koulichev he regretted the disputes between Macedonian deputies over Protogerov's death, which should be forgotten. Koulichev retorted that he and his friends only desired the Government to apply the laws; whereat the Tsar said he and his Government had always felt they should not inter-

fere with "Macedonian affairs"! Liaptchev would not answer Koulichev when asked (repeatedly) in the Sobranié what steps were being taken to stop the murders, though telling him privately: "What can I do? It is the will of a higher place." Koulichev seldom stirred from his house and never alone; in January 1931, his life was so openly threatened that he resigned as deputy (as Mihailov had demanded) and went to Geneva as Correspondent of *Bulagence*.

Vassil Pundev, editor of *Vardar*, wrote openly that the Mihailovist assassins worked with the Government, adding (about Protogerov's death): "Even if we die for it we must throw light upon that crime." He did both. He published a book of revelations and planned a general congress; but on March 4, 1930, upon Mihailov's signed and sealed order, he and his bodyguard were shot in Sofia. His brother (Mihail), Secretary of the Bulgarian Legation in Bucharest, met the same fate in September 1932. After Vassil's death Liaptchev suspended *Vardar*! Most Sofia newspapers hardly mentioned this journalist's death; but at Tsankov's insistence the assassins were arrested and in August the Public Prosecutor summoned Mihailov—through the Official Gazette because "his residence was unknown". Naturally he did not appear and was tried *in contumaciam*. *Makedonia* wrote that 207 lawyers had volunteered to defend him, though the Law Association denied this. But the presiding judge had property in Nevrokop: the chief witness for the prosecution disappeared: Dr. Stanichev (president of the National Committee) appeared for the defence and showed extraordinary solicitude for the murderers: few witnesses dared speak (for even the judges were openly menaced); so though Mihailov never denied his guilt, declaring "IMRO" had acted in legitimate defence against a "traitor", he was acquitted "for want of proofs" (which simply legalised his terrorism). But two assassins—withstanding the plea that these "honest Macedonian boys" had acted under orders—were condemned to fifteen years' hard labour (of which they served two). The presiding judge, who had urged their acquittal because "if they had not executed Mihailov's orders they would have been killed themselves" (which was nonsense), was decorated by the Tsar: another judge (member of the National Committee) who had helped the assassins in gaol (against regulations) was promoted; but the Prosecutor—who had demanded

Mihailov's death—was persecuted and eventually “committed suicide” in mysterious circumstances. Thus was the myth of Mihailov's power deliberately built so that the Government might protest inability to suppress him and the people be scared to disobey his commands—the commands of the Italophile High Command! During June a Protogerovist (arrested for shooting a Mihailovist police agent) was shot in gaol by a fellow-prisoner. Several Protogerovists were killed in gaol at different times, warders smuggling weapons to the assassins; yet no enquiry was ever made. So it seemed Mihailov's long arm reached everywhere.

The Liaptchev Government's position was weakening fast. In June 1929 it had tried to rally its disintegrating party by a scare that scores of Soviet agents had landed from four sailing vessels flying Russian flags, which had been found abandoned off Bourgas; then a badly staged attack upon an empty car which had carried Liaptchev and Grigor Vassilev was used to distract attention from its scandalous Amnesty Bill. In October, after the Bajdarov revelations and Veltchev affair, Tsankov withdrew from it his thirty-five deputies' support; then in January 1930 two Tsankovist Ministers resigned. The “Communist menace” was the pretext for bloody incidents and terror to win communal elections in February; then the Macedonian deputies (now all Mihailovists) formally declared for Liaptchev: and Tchkatrov prophesied another “purge of Left elements” as in 1923 and 1925. But in May came crisis. Liaptchev found he must either go, or work with Tsankov upon Tsankov's terms. He tried to whittle down Tsankov's demands but was out-manceuvred and compelled to resign; whereupon, to the Opposition's intense indignation, the Tsar immediately recalled him, neglecting even the ordinary constitutional formality of consulting the Opposition leaders! However, Tsankov joined the Cabinet (as Minister of Education) with his friends Petko Stainov and Professor Michailkov; their influence led to some slight measures against terrorists: but Tsankov said afterwards that though the Cabinet took decisions against terrorists these were not enforced.

But Tsankov's former friends (Kalfov and Roussev) and the Zveno Group (Georghiev, Kazazov and Petar Todorov) were ill-content at Tsankov's compromise with Liaptchev's Volkovists who crushed the people by ruthless terror and allied

themselves with Italy. The Zveno men stood firm for radical social reforms, an end of persecution, friendship with Yugoslavia: they looked askance at the Tsar's Italian entanglement: they refused to compromise; and in sympathy with them stood a body of distinguished officers, Veltchev's friends, who threatened Volkovist military domination as their numbers grew. So the Italophile Volkovists hatched a plot with Mihailov.

Lieutenant Kroum Alexiev, A.D.C. to General Jetchev, Commandant of the Sofia Garrison, was in G.H.Q. orderly room. The telephone rang. His Regimental Commanding Officer, Colonel Zdravko Georghiev, had a job for him and would meet him at a street corner.

"Odd place to meet your C.O.," commented a brother officer. Alexiev waited in the street. At last Colonel Georghiev got off a tram. It was eight o'clock in the evening of August 20, 1930.

"You are to carry urgent despatches to Major Nikola Christov of No. 111 Frontier Sector at Kustendil. I was going to send you in my car, but Colonel Zahov, who commands at Kustendil and is returning there to-night, says he'll take you. He is waiting for you in Makedonia Square. Come—I'll walk there with you."

"May I telephone my wife to say I've gone?" asked Alexiev.

"No—we must hurry. I'll ring her up for you."

A military car stood in the Square. Zahov sat beside the driver. Behind sat a civilian. Zahov introduced him—"My friend Markov, a fruit merchant." Georghiev handed the despatches to Alexiev and wished him a good journey.

They bumped along, chatting as they went. When near Kustendil, Zahov said suddenly: "My brother-in-law is repairing Sariiska mill. He's expecting us to supper there."

"But my despatches are urgent Sir!" expostulated Alexiev.

The car drove to the mill. Zahov and Markov went in. Several armed men came out of the darkness.

"Is Colonel Zahov's brother-in-law here?" Alexiev asked them.

"No," answered one of the men—and chuckled. Then Zahov called Alexiev to come in. Alexiev hesitated. "Come in—that is an order," called Zahov. The men

seized Alexiev, disarmed him, threw down his bogus despatches.

"You are arrested by General Jetchev's orders," said Zahov. "You are a spy for Serbia! You must tell Markov who your accomplices are—I leave you to him. If you try to escape you'll be shot."

"I am no spy. This is a lie—or misunderstanding. Anyway, why am I not arrested in barracks instead of by these civilian ruffians?"

Zahov turned on his heel and marched out. And so the Army High Command, Volkov's faction serving Italy's policy, handed over Alexiev to Mihailov's terrorists, for Markov's real name was Tryphon Saev, notorious assassin!

Alexiev was still a broken man when in 1934 he dared tell me his dreadful story (though Bulgaria's numerous assassins should note that he added nothing to the well-known published account). His hands shook: there was horror in his eyes.

He was spat upon and slapped in the face. "Admit you received papers from officers at the War Office and passed them to the Director of Counter-Espionage at Police Headquarters, Ninov: and to Krouchovski, Inspector of State Security. They are spies too—they've confessed everything. Tell us which officers gave you the papers—was it Colonel R——, or Major Christov, or Colonel Marinopolski, or——" and his inquisitors mentioned a string of officers who were Lazarov's and Veltchev's friends, their plan being to frame up a conspiracy involving the Volkovists' chief opponents in the Army and Police; among these was Colonel Marinopolski who was hated for his brusque and repeated refusals to have any dealings with the terrorists. Once a plot could be "discovered", there was no limit to those the Volkovists might involve in it, nor to the bitterness which might be stirred against Yugoslavia by pretending Yugoslav frontier officers were involved too.

Alexiev remained silent. At last he was left alone—" . . . but if you don't speak to-morrow you'll be forced to." He threw himself upon some straw—all there was to lie upon.

Next day came Saev again with Captain Kyril Stoymenov. The same questions. They left paper and ink, telling him to write answers and name as accomplices Colonel Marinopolski and other officers they had mentioned, "who are not our people". But they left no food.

Saev came again later with a young man called André Andreev. Alexiev recognised him—he was a former terrorist, brother-in-law of a Kustendil garrison officer: he had lived opposite Alexiev in Sofia. But Andreev, according to the official tale, being a rascally railway clerk in the Bulgarian section at Tsaribrod frontier station, had agreed to earn 200 *dinars* monthly by collecting trivial information for the Yugoslavs; then, so that he could sell faked IMRO documents, he had ordered an IMRO seal. But the engraver mentioned this to a friend of Kyril Drangov; and so, when on August 6 Andreev called for his seal, he was kidnapped (in the middle of Sofia) and taken to Dinovski Chiftlik for interrogation. But this tale was evidently a well-planned act upon which to base this monstrous frame-up. A version that a note in Andreev's possession was addressed to the Yugoslav Legation and signed Marinopolski was soon dropped.

Andreev now told that in December he had met Ninov, Krouchovski: and Alexiev—who wore a blue suit; they gave him papers for Yugoslav frontier officials. Alexiev denied the tale—he had no blue suit. So they left him again, after more threats. Alexiev wrote to General Jetchev, Colonel Georghiev, and his wife, asking what he must do. When Saev found Alexiev had not written what was required he was livid with rage. Exclaiming: "Traitors must not die in uniform," he ordered the guards to strip Alexiev, dress him in rags, get their rifles. But this threat did not move him. Again they left him. Still no food—and the guards would not let him sleep.

Early the third day Saev and Stoymenov returned. "You've written nothing yet? Very well—beat the dog!" Saev called for wood, rope and irons. Alexiev was turned feet up, his legs lashed to posts, his shoulders roped till they cracked. A noose round his neck choked his cries: then he was thrashed, spat upon, bastinadoed, his hands crushed till the bones in one broke; while Saev repeated over and over the names of his alleged accomplices "from a list probably drawn up at military headquarters by some of my chiefs". Finally Saev ordered the irons to be heated. They were brought, glowing red. Slowly they were pushed closer and closer to his eyes. . . .

"For God's sake, not that! I'll write whatever you please," cried Alexiev, his nerve broken at last.

So he wrote. Saev dictated. The irons were kept hot.

Alexiev does not remember all he wrote; but it occurred to him that since Marinopolski was General Jetchev's friend he could easily clear himself: and if only he (Alexiev) could see Jetchev too, surely all would be well.

When Saev had gone Alexiev explained to Stoymenov (a brother-officer) that all he had written was untrue, asking Stoymenov to tell Zahov so. Stoymenov went: then Saev came in raging, telling Alexiev that if he dared deny what he'd written the torture he'd suffered was nothing to what he'd get. His eyes would not be spared next time.

On the fourth day a note came for Alexiev—from Kourtev, one of Mihailov's chief lieutenants. Kourtev said General Jetchev had promised nothing would happen to Alexiev provided he stood by what he had written: but if he repudiated it, anything might happen. Then Kourtev came himself and was so polite that Alexiev hoped "this important and intelligent man" might help him. "Do you think an innocent man could be convicted?" asked Alexiev cautiously. "No," answered Kourtev; "but since you have been placed in our hands your chiefs are in an awkward position and if you were liberated Jetchev would have you killed. But if all goes well, you'll be rehabilitated later."

Not long afterwards Stoymenov came with Andreev again, bringing a questionnaire from Zahov. More dictation. Then Andreev, "the spy", was told he was free! He had played his part.

On August 26 Saev and Stoymenov told Alexiev he would be taken to Jetchev, Georghiev and Zahov in Sofia. His uniform was returned to him. Hopeful, he ate and slept a little.

That evening they started, in a military car—Alexiev, Stoymenov, and Lieutenant Kornetchki. Alexiev's ankles were bound to one side of the car, his wrists to the other. Near Sofia, while they were held up by ox wagons, an officer in camp near by called out to ask who they were.

"Kustendil Garrison—taking a sick officer to hospital," answered Stoymenov.

Then they were met by an officer in General Jetchev's car and told to drive to the Arsenal. Here Stoymenov and Kornetchki guarded Alexiev until morning; they were relieved by Lieutenants Chorlakov and Sokolov. Alexiev tried to tell them of his innocence but they answered that it was none of their business.

Late on the 28th Zahov and Saev came—Saev bringing

another letter from Kourtev like the first. Zahov spoke abusively of Marinopolski: adding that if Alexiev repudiated his statements now he would be tortured as nobody was ever tortured before.

"But why not give me a fair trial? Where are General Jetchev and Colonel Georghiev? And what has this swine Saev to do with it all?" asked Alexiev.

"Matters like these are never investigated by courts," replied Zahov. "I was chosen from among forty Colonels to conduct this enquiry—and nobody knows where you are anyway. Marinopolski will suffer: but you'll be spared if you behave yourself. Now come—you shall repeat all you've told us before Marinopolski."

And so the two victims confronted each other. Alexiev hesitated. But there was Saev beside him. He could not forget the glowing irons. He admitted all Zahov's charges against Marinopolski and himself.

Colonel Marinopolski, wartime hero commanding Rustchuk Garrison, had been summoned to Sofia. Arriving on August 27 he slept at his brother's house; next morning he went to the War Office.

He was called before the War Minister, General Bakardjiev. General Jetchev, Colonels Zdravko Georghiev, Zahov and Marinkov (now Chief of Staff) were present.

"Colonel Marinopolski, you are arrested: you are a spy for Yugoslavia!"

"What a damned lie! Have you actually called me here to make that monstrous accusation?"

"We have proofs. You shall hear them. Come."

Marinopolski was taken to the Arsenal, stripped of badges and decorations, left to Zahov's care, confronted by the petrified Alexiev.

The next afternoon (29th) Kornetchki was in charge of the two prisoners. They were locked in their (almost adjoining) rooms, their windows boarded up outside; but in each door was a spy-hole through which the sentry outside might observe them. Sokolov looked in.

"Marinopolski wants cigarettes. Do you want anything?" Alexiev asked for the same.

"Lance-Corporal Kostov!" called Sokolov to the sentry. "Go and get cigarettes for the prisoners." The sentry went.

Half an hour later Alexiev heard exclamations. He heard Kornetchki abusing somebody—then calling for water to wash his hands. Sokolov brought his cigarettes. Later

still Alexiev heard a car. Towards midnight the car came back. Sokolov and Kornetchki came in, bringing wine; they told Alexiev that Marinopolski had been taken to Army Headquarters for interrogation, had admitted everything and had been brought back to his room. But Alexiev had a premonition. When they had gone he listened. He could hear no sound from Marinopolski's room.

As dawn came through the chinks in his boarded window Alexiev felt he could bear the strain no longer. He had not slept. He was alone. A window pane was broken. There was a jagged piece of glass. He looked at it, fingered it. Setting his teeth he plunged the point of it into his left wrist till the blood spurted from the artery. But he felt no pain. He dipped his finger in his warm blood and wrote with it upon the wall:

"I die innocent."

Then he lay down. . . .

Twelve hours later he opened his eyes. The first person he saw was Saev, watching him as he lay upon the operating table at the Military Hospital to which he had been rushed when the sentry had noticed him bleeding to death. Tiresome, perhaps, that the sentry had seen him—or perhaps his death might have been awkward now Marinopolski was dead.

Doctor Moskov certified that Marinopolski had hanged himself, with his Sam Browne belt, from a hook in the wall of his room sixty-seven inches from the ground! His brother had been puzzled when he did not return, but in answer to his enquiry the War Office "supposed Marinopolski had gone back to Rustchuk"; then, on the 30th, he got a chit from G.H.Q. saying Marinopolski, arrested for interrogation, had committed suicide for unknown reasons: his body was in the mortuary. When his brother enquired how this could be, Jetchev pretended two notes Marinopolski had written, expressing horror at the odious defamation, indicated his intention to kill himself.

But in fact he had been strangled to death, then hanged from the hook. When the sentry returned with the cigarettes, Kornetchki called him in to see that Marinopolski had hanged himself! He was murdered so that he could never clear himself and it might be said he had killed himself for shame. Contrary to military regulations governing ordinary cases of suicide he was buried without military honours or religious service.

Though Ninov and Krouchovski had been arrested, the

Police Chief Karageozov had sternly refused to hand them over to the terrorists for "interrogation" and had taken the matter up himself. On September 4 he brought them to Alexiev in hospital and soon detected that Alexiev knew neither. Alexiev told him the whole story. "Kill me," he begged, "for I am responsible for Marinopolski's death. But I was so tortured I could do nothing else."

Though guarded always, Alexiev was now better treated and dared deny the whole story before Zahov, Karageozov, Ninov, Krouchevski and Andreev; whereupon Zahov and Saev threatened him again so direfully that when, on September 11, he was taken before all the Police Chiefs and noticed Zahov there too his nerves broke at last. He cried that he was guilty. But the Police Chiefs saw his state. They were not satisfied. They interrogated him separately, encouraging him to tell the truth fearlessly. He broke down. Sobbing, he told his story.

Five days later, feeling restored, he wrote a full report. The Chief of Staff urged him to write that he had heard Marinopolski was a spy frequently associating with foreigners: to which he answered that doubtless this information came from the same source as the story he had written under compulsion. The Chief of Staff promised him long leave and reinstatement: but added that he would not be allowed to resign and must say nothing because high interests were at stake.

On September 17 Alexiev went home; but his formally registered applications for medical examination and sick leave were ignored, likewise reports to the War Minister and the Tsar. Eventually he brought a slander action against the Minister of Justice (Milanov) who had told the Press he was a spy; the Court ordered the Minister to apologise! But that is all the satisfaction Alexiev obtained. Declining to connive at his superiors' monstrousness by silence, he was dismissed on October 15; but (at Liaptchev's order) he was not permitted to leave Bulgaria. Thereupon he wrote his full story, which was secretly circulated throughout the Army. Thereafter he lived with a revolver in each pocket, constantly watched, receiving altogether eighteen written threats of death. Seeking audience of the Tsar he was turned away. Few dared patronise the bookshop he opened for a living.

There had been rumours in Sofia: though the "free" Press remained mute. On September 15, to allay them, the

War Office issued a *communiqué* saying an officer and two police officials had been arrested, but investigations had proved their innocence. The War Office organ wrote that Marinopolski's and Alexiev's innocence delighted everybody.

But on September 21, *Zveno* came out with the full story of this "second Dreyfus Case". There was consternation. "This is the climax. . . . A dark spirit of fear paralyses Bulgaria. There is silence, through fear," thundered *Zveno*: courageously chivvyng the War Minister and Chief of Staff from one false position to another, from statement to contradiction. Soon the entire Press was devoting columns to fierce controversy.

The War Office now formally declared that "no Bulgarian military commander is so immoral that . . . he would hand over his subordinates to irresponsible circles or permit them to be tortured". The War Minister added that the Army must be beyond political influences: but some circles wished to involve the Army Chiefs by the entirely false rumour that Alexiev had been tortured! Then the Chief of Staff contradicted the War Office *communiqué* by suggesting Marinopolski would never have committed suicide if he had been innocent: Dreyfus had clung to life to clear his name. By Bulgarian Military Law, officers of Marinopolski's rank might be arrested only in their houses and never without the Tsar's consent; moreover Alexiev should have been court-martialled for slandering Marinopolski. Had the Tsar consented: and why was Alexiev not court-martialled, cried *Zveno*: adding that Bulgaria's rulers, "afraid to lose their sceptre", were responsible for the murders in Sofia's streets. The terrorists, seconded by *Makedonia* and *Zora*, retorted that *Zveno's* editors should be "at the bottom of the Isker river". Then the Minister of Justice rashly said proceedings would be taken against *Zveno*. Kazazov joyfully begged for proceedings immediately; whereupon the Minister denied he had ever suggested proceedings: so Kazazov wrote that he lied. For that the Minister did eventually take proceedings, but Kazazov won; so a law-court convicted the Minister of Justice as a liar!

Not till December 5 (1930) did deputies succeed in raising the affair in the Sobranié. Kimon Georghiev led the attack, but was almost unsupported by his scared colleagues. Malinov demanded the War Minister's resignation; but Tsankov's attitude was equivocal: though he remarked that

under his regime, as now, irresponsible factors did too much. In a cowardly and contradictory answer the War Minister tried to cast fresh suspicion upon Alexiev and Marinopolski; but neither the kidnapping of Andreev, nor where and by whom Alexiev was interrogated, was explained. Nor dared anyone bring proceedings against Alexiev, though he wrote provocatively that Colonel Zdravko Georghiev "surrendered me, at the War Minister's order, into the hands of irresponsible factors".

"After reading this story", wrote the anonymous editor of the account circulated, "most terrible for us true Bulgarians who are reared in a spirit of brotherhood and love, nothing remains except to ask: What security exists for Bulgarian citizens' lives; and who gives to a handful of individuals masquerading as patriots, in the name of a certain IMRO, the right to act as if they were the sovereign rulers of our beloved country: in recent years killing by every illegal, bestial and criminal means innocent Bulgarian citizens in broad daylight: and finally reaching the pinnacle of impudence by attacking the honour of our brave officers?"

A wave of indignation swept the country, splitting the nation and dooming the Government. There was talk of a *coup d'état*. Numerous officers urged Veltchev to re-form the League in defence of their professional interests and honour; Veltchev (defying numerous threats) did so, becoming Organising Secretary and Political Director. Simultaneously Kimon Georghiev, Kazazov, Petar Todorov and others broke definitely with Tsankov, whose equivocal attitude had disgusted them (and Kalfov and Roussev too). The two groups collaborated.

Only the diversion of Tsar Boris' engagement to Princess Giovanna of Savoy, announced on October 3, postponed the Government's downfall—perhaps this "Spy Affair" hastened Italian agreement to the match. The Tsar went to Italy, while all those who had upheld the High Command and terrorists waxed enthusiastic at this cementing of Italo-Bulgarian friendship.

The Tsar was married at Assisi on October 25 and returned amid popular rejoicings on the 31st, being married again in Sofia according to the Orthodox rite. For two years the match had been spoken of: but religious obstacles were only overcome when the Royal couple signed the required pledge that their children would be reared in the

Roman Catholic faith (though it was apparently agreed that a Crown Prince should be Orthodox). When Princess Marie Louise was born, on January 13, 1933, there was disappointment in Supremist circles which had hoped for an heir (the Bulgarian Constitution making no provision for female succession); however, Tsar Boris, ignoring his pledge, had his daughter baptised into the Orthodox Church, secretly and hastily, before the Queen of Italy arrived, thus somewhat allaying disappointment but causing the (temporary) recall of the incensed Papal Nuncio.

But Tsar Boris (Supreme Chief of the Army) found his prestige would go unless measures were taken against the perpetrators of the "Spy Affair". So a commission of enquiry investigated. The Mihailovists produced "evidence" that there had been at least one spy, so Andreev had to submit to three years' imprisonment; but Alexiev's and Marinopolski's innocence was formally established. In January Colonel Zahov was pensioned: General Bakardjiev left the War Office to General Kissiov (who was tarred with the same brush): there was a reshuffle of commands; but Bakardjiev, Marinkov, Jetchev, Zdravko Georghiev, Kornetchki and all others implicated continued to serve, their careers scarcely interrupted. Nobody was punished! Though Andreev's "kidnappers" were well known, they "could not be found". The Tsar's prestige suffered.

Elections were due on June 21, 1931. The Opposition—headed by Malinov—demanded a Coalition Cabinet to conduct them, whereupon the Government tried to resurrect the Communist bogey and paint the rising Agrarian Party with a fresh coat of Red; however, on April 20, it resigned: whereupon Tsar Boris invited Malinov to form a Coalition with the Democratic Entente, Democrats, Liberals and Radicals. But Malinov could not reconcile the exaggerated demands of Liaptchev, Tsankov and Bourov (who had sunk their differences to preserve power) with his own followers' principles, so the Tsar had to choose between a Coalition *including* the Agrarians but without the Democratic Entente, or the Liaptchev Government again. He chose Liaptchev! There was wild indignation and talk of a republic. Indignation grew when Liaptchev allied himself with Radoslavov's war-mongers, a step the Opposition countered by combining (Democrats, Radicals and anti-Radoslavov Liberals with the Agrarians) in one National Bloc behind Malinov.

During a fierce electoral campaign the Government declared the National Bloc financed from abroad: even placarding Sofia with portraits of Malinov and Dotcho Ouzounov side by side, implying they were hand in glove; whereupon France declined the Bulgarian Government's request for Ouzounov's extradition, since he was so evidently a political fugitive! The Government mobilised partisan gangsters who used every conceivable trick and violence to ensure its success; but the Army and Police, angered by the "Spy Affair", were no longer behind it; moreover the desperate peasants were emboldened by alliance with other parties.

Consequently the Government sustained a crushing defeat, winning only sixty-seven seats and its Radoslavovist allies eleven. The National Bloc gained 152, of which seventy-two went to the Agrarians, forty-three to the Democrats, thirty to the anti-Radoslavov Liberals and seven to the Radicals. Of the remaining seats the Communists (reappearing as the Independent Labour Party) got thirty-one, the Macedonians (nominated by Mihailov) eight, and the Socialists five. An immediate recrudescence of Communist disturbances was undoubtedly encouraged by the defeated Democratic Entente which contemplated a coup, but found too little sympathy in the Army. Malinov formed his Government with two other Democrats (Mouchanov and Girghinov), three Agrarians (Gitchev, Mouraviev and Yordanov: Ministers respectively of Agriculture, Education and Public Works) two Liberals and one Radical. But General Kissiov remained War Minister, with General Bakardjiev as Chief of Staff!

The country sighed with relief. But behind the constitutional façade there lurked always Mihailov's assassins, directed by the Volkovist High Command and strangely powerful still.

Early in June Mihailov, realising Liaptchev's Government was doomed, had hurried to Rome to confer with Volkov and the Italians; but the secret of his power over Malinov's outwardly democratic Government was not known till much later. Minister Gitchev and his brother-in-law Virghil Dimov, young secretary of the Agrarian Union (who had made overtures to Volkov), met Mihailov at Rila Monastery and negotiated a secret understanding. When Dimov joined the Cabinet in 1932 he met Mihailov again, at Kustendil, and concluded a formal agreement. Moura-

view silently disapproved, the Agrarian rank and file knew nothing. It may be said that only by alliance with that Hidden Power which filled Bulgarians with terror might the Agrarian Party share the Government; but such compromise paralysed the Government, bringing demoralisation and corruption which foreshadowed decomposition.

The terms of the Dimov-Mihailov agreement (which were scrupulously observed) were: The Agrarian leaders would oppose *entente* with Yugoslavia so long as Supremist claims were unrealised: follow Italy in foreign policy: demand treaty revision in public speeches: defend Mihailov's Organisation, try to popularise it, support it against Proto-gerovists and Federalists and uphold its authority in Petritch Department; Mihailov's terrorists would protect the Agrarian leaders: Mihailov's deputies would support them: subsidies from "a foreign power" would come to them: former Agrarian leaders would be prevented from challenging their leadership of the Agrarian Party. Dimov would keep in touch with Mihailov through Drangov. Fantastic as this may sound it was widely published in the Opposition Press during 1933, being confirmed to me by those best qualified to know and by my own observation of Dimov's relations with Mihailovists.

CHAPTER X

DEMOCRACY UNDER TERROR

"It is your turn next," cried Drangov to Naoum Tomalevski as they passed each other with their respective bodyguards in Sofia one November day in 1930.

Tomalevski knew the Mihailovists awaited their chance—strange callers at his house had asked for him. He was preparing for an anti-Mihailovist congress; moreover he had declared at Vassil Pundev's funeral that the Liaptchev Government were leagued with the Mihailovists, nor dared prosecute him for saying so because he held documentary proof. The Government knew well that this celebrated External Representative of IMRO, known personally to Mussolini and the Pope, formerly collector of Italian subsidies, spoke truly. Mihailovist agents asked in vain to buy his documents; then, to his joy, proceedings were arranged against him; but on December 2, before they began, he fell by Tchernozemski's hand—Mihailov's one hundred and eleventh known victim since Protogerov died! His gigantic funeral was conducted by Archbishop Stefan; but few witnesses dared appear at his assassin's trial, nor dared his family produce his documents.

Assassins lurked for Parlitchev one night; whereupon he went into hiding. But his bodyguard, wounded once by a visitor, was asked to supper by a "friend" and mortally wounded by assassins his host called in. The assassins had "alibis" which kept them out of gaol until 1934.

The feud continued. Two Protogerovists were shot in a Sofia cabaret on January 13, 1931, and their assassins were actually arrested! Then on February 8, Giurkov, a lawyer who, alone among Mihailov's lieutenants, had once raided into Yugoslavia, was cornered and murdered in a shop by two men who called, with each shot they fired, the name of one of Mihailov's victims. Protogerovists, they were imprisoned for life; but they had received the order to kill Giurkov in very mysterious circumstances: the Protogerovist

leaders emphatically denied issuing the order: Giurkov was a popular and reasonable man who had lately worked for reconciliation with the Protogerovists and was so sure of their goodwill that he had dispensed of a bodyguard. Unquestionably Mihailov instigated this crime, for the triumph of moderation would have meant his downfall; but he ordered another imprisoned murderer to kill Giurkov's assassins in gaol and they were both wounded in the prison yard.

Though representatives of the Reserve Officers' and N.C.O.s' Associations had pledged support to Mihailov, there had been at the Macedonian immigrants' Congress in December 1930 an undercurrent so threatening that the National Committee felt bound to try for reconciliation. So an Arbitration Commission under General (of reserve) Boyadjiev met Protogerovist representatives who, overlooking the cabaret and other outrages, agreed to stop all retaliation provided the Mihailovists ceased fire too; they suggested the provisional suspension of all activities in South Serbia, and proposed a joint committee to settle all disputes until a revolutionary congress could be held to hear both sides. On February 6, 1931, the Arbitration Commission accepted these terms: but Mihailov disliked them: and Giurkov's death provided a convenient pretext for direct action.

On February 13 Parlitchev sent his wife to bring PopChristov and wife and bodyguard to a secret rendezvous; but PopChristov's guard had sold his master (and was afterwards shot for it). Sent to bring a car, he told a Mihailovist; so the car was held up (in Sofia) by Mihailovists in police uniforms, who drove PopChristov and the two women to a house where Razvigorov, Kourtev, Paraspourov and Andreev's kidnapper Gerasimov (all natives of Shtip) were waiting. For twenty-four hours they were confined without food or fire or bed and threatened until PopChristov, wishing to save the women, signed a declaration that "as a result of the deliberations of the Arbitration Commission" he withdrew unconditionally from all activities. The women were released but PopChristov held (elsewhere) until Parlitchev reluctantly signed too, to save his friend. They took no further part in the feud—and Mihailov thought he had won.

But Shandanov repudiated PopChristov and Parlitchev and their "independent action". Doctor Anastas Naoumov took PopChristov's place beside Shandanov and PopTodorov upon the Central Committee, which issued an angry manifesto declaring resistance until death to "Mihailov and his

bloody band who served the Bulgarian Fascist Government, massacring workmen and peasants and now destroying their own ranks".

Actually there was a difference of principle here too. Parlitchev, Bajdarov, Tomalevski and PopChristov were Bulgarophiles; but they were reasonable men who were appalled by Mihailov's promiscuous murders: outraged to find that Volkov and the Italians wished to use IMRO for their own purposes only; they indignantly declared against Mihailov when he murdered Protogerov, though they did not entirely share the views Protogerov was developing. But Shandanov, following Protogerov's initiative, had turned from the Bulgarophile to the truly Macedonian views of Deltchev; he made this plain in December 1932 (through *Revolutionary Sheet*), then again through a bold provincial paper which dared publish an interview with him in the summer of 1933.

A scholarly "legal" Macedonian friend brought Shandanov to my house one night in January 1935. He asked for drawn curtains against prying eyes. A revolver barrel protruded from his coat: his bodyguard stayed always at the door, watching for enemies who might track him through the snow. As we had tea together his sincerity, wit and culture impressed me. He told romantically how, as a lad in Okhrid's dark streets upon the eve of the Ilinden revolt, he had watched a party headed by a priest stealthily cutting telegraph wires—but the party were cornered and shot themselves to avoid capture. The priest was Shandanov's cousin. The incident inspired him to become a revolutionary. He had been arrested by the Serbs for his part in the Okhrid rising in 1913 but was amnestied; then he served the Bulgarians as an officer during the World War.

Shandanov stood for South Slav and ultimately Balkan Federation (an aim wildly denounced when Mouraviev ventured to suggest it in the Sobranié in March 1930); he was an "enthusiastic advocate" of the "union of the South Slavs . . . a great and noble aim but hard to realise". The Obidinenists sought the same, but through Communism (which Shandanov disliked); whereas the Mihailovists worked for Bulgarian hegemony and against understanding with Yugoslavia. Shandanov's followers had nothing in common with the separatist aims of *Ustacha* which few Croats supported: though, like the Macedonians, the Croats wanted decentralisation and democratic liberties within Yugoslavia.

To this end the people would adopt revolutionary methods if need be, but terrorist outrages were cruel provocation. The National Bloc Government's continued use of the Mihailovists against peasants and Socialists who could be convicted under no law was a shameful policy which had caused two wars and might lead to "the end of the Third Bulgarian Kingdom". It was said the Mihailovists "defended the Throne"; their murders were called "Macedonian" when in justice they should be called "Italian". There must be an end of the "adventurous scramble for dynastic interests". He and his followers, concluded Shandanov, had many Yugoslav friends, but not among the Dictatorship's supporters.

Politika never wrote a good word of Shandanov; to the last his papers clamoured for Macedonian cultural rights in Yugoslavia—but *equally in Bulgaria*, where the immigrants were muzzled by terror. Indeed Shandanov's views corresponded with those of the Zveno Group which had his entire sympathy: but both were called "Serbian spies, hirelings of Belgrade"; however, it is significant that while the Mihailovists were always affluent, Shandanov's men were extremely impecunious and not even the Bulgarian chauvinist Press denied that those shot by Mihailovists generally had empty pockets. Shandanov's adherents could count upon immigrants' support in all Bulgarian provincial towns, where the Mihailovists were never strong; but the rich immigrants in Sofia either dared not or would not support them—though sometimes some were penalised for taking the Mihailovists' part too noisily. Touring South Serbia in 1935 I found the peasants spoke everywhere of Shandanov and his friends with affection, but of Mihailov with contempt; yet Shandanov's view was seldom heard in western Europe, being drowned, until 1934, by Bulgarian Foreign Office and Mihailovist National Committee propaganda which pretended always that until the Slavs of South Serbia were acknowledged a "Bulgarian Minority" the Bulgarian Government could not restrain the "all-powerful IMRO".

Early in August 1931 the new Minister of Interior, Mouchanov, ordered the arrest of some Macedonian immigrants, time-honoured gesture of the Government's will to restrain the revolutionaries; so he was embarrassed when chance revealed that he received Tchkatrov at his house and the Press was ordered not to mention this. Late on August 11 Lef Glavinchev was passing Mouchanov's house with a companion when shots from a public garden wounded him; but

the Protogerovists replied and one of their assailants fell mortally wounded. Questioned by the police, Mouchanov admitted that Tchkatrov had been conferring with him: Tchkatrov's bodyguards outside had supposed Glavinchev lurked to attack Tchkatrov.

None knew the houses in Sofia which sheltered the Protogerovist leaders, who seldom passed consecutive nights at the same address. PopTodorov had his letters addressed to a dairy. On August 15 a "lady in black" left a parcel there for him, bearing a Foreign Office label; his friend Lilov collected it—evidently a book. Lilov's children thought he had brought them chocolates and snatched it, but he told them it was not theirs and threw it upon his bed. Later, tucking it under his arm, he started for PopTodorov's lodging. He boarded a tram. He thought he would open the parcel: but an officer he knew sat down beside him. He put it under his arm again.

Reaching his destination he found PopTodorov with his father, Shandanov and Petzo Traikov. He began to unwrap the parcel—a copy of a novel about IMRO; but instead of print there was dynamite. There was a shattering explosion. The back of the book, bearing skull and cross-bones, stuck to the wall with a strip of flesh. Nobody was killed, but Lilov lost a hand, two others an eye, Shandanov was temporarily blinded. Happily Dimitar Tomalevski, arriving immediately afterwards, rushed them elsewhere before news of the explosion brought assassins to finish them off. Within a week, in case they should betray the "lady in black", the dairyman's son disappeared and the dairyman himself was shot by the Mihailovist deputy Filipov's bodyguard—who had an alibi of course; but the lady, who continued to be mischievous, paid her price a year afterwards to a day.

Five months later a sub-machine-gun opened fire from a window at PopTodorov as he emerged from the opposite house with companions. By a miracle one only was wounded; the others put to flight their assailants, who had pursued them round the street corner.

At the end of 1931 Gitchev and Dimov, helped by the Liberal Minister of Justice Varbenov (a strangely uncouth creature, eventually accused by the legal profession of tampering with justice!) fulfilled their alleged pledge to Mihailov that the Government's Amnesty Bill should operate in favour of all assassins arrested before the death of Giurkov—whose murderers, if liberated and interrogated, might betray

Mihailov's inspiration of that crime. At the last minute the amnesty was extended from January 1 to 31, however, to release the cabaret crime assassins; it released, among others, Tchernozemski (*though* he had resisted arrest) but not a Protogerovist (*because* he had resisted arrest) who was in gaol for shooting one of Protogerov's assassins!

In June 1931 a certain Pero Gruber had come to Sofia, saying he represented *Ustacha*. The National Committee welcomed him royally, immigrant girls were sent with bouquets to the station, he was introduced to Mihailovist leaders, shown their arms stores, received by the Foreign Minister (Bourov), presented with an album autographed by all his enthusiastic hosts. He told an excellent story to the Belgrade Police and Press!

At the immigrants' Congress at Sofia in January 1932 the National Committee's president (Stanichev) was hotly blamed for "imprudent relations with Gruber". The delegates had been picked, several thrashed and a couple shot as a warning to any who thought to criticise Mihailovist control; but they seized upon Stanichev's "imprudence" as a pretext for revolt, electing Dimiter Mihailov in his stead. Ivan Mihailov was dissatisfied. Dimiter had worked for reconciliation: was elected to continue that work: declined to subsidise Ivan from immigrants' subscriptions! Karadjov, of Ivan's Central Committee but much older than the others, urged reconciliation too.

On April 17 Ivan Mihailov held near Kustendil his so-called "Eighth Revolutionary Congress"; the deputy Marmev presided: Kondov, Doumev, Eftimov and others of the National Committee (but not Dimiter Mihailov) attended. The "Congress" found that Ivan had well spent 167,326,000 *leva*; then it elected Kourtev in Karadjov's place and instructed Ivan's Committee "to continue the hunt for Alexandrov's intellectual murderers"—but not so far, commented the Protogerovists, as "a certain Bulgarian Minister abroad" (meaning Volkov). The Balkan Federation idea was repudiated and further terrorism in South Serbia agreed upon: though the terrorists declined all responsibility for international complications which might ensue, since the Powers had not "liberated" Macedonia. *Makedonia* (edited by Doumev) reported all these proceedings!

On May 1 Ivan Mihailov proclaimed a month's truce to give "enemies of IMRO time to renounce their evil past".

This encouraged Georghi Traikov to attend the Democratic Party's Congress in Sofia. On May 9 he was playing cards in a café with two police officers when a dozen Mihailovists pumped thirty bullets into him. His companions wounded two assassins who were arrested: but the others withdrew, firing to cover their retreat; though all were known, nothing could be done against them in this "democratic" country and even the two arrested murderers were soon released because "they had fired in self-defence". Thereupon Ivan Mihailov declared the Protogerovists had broken the truce. Dimiter Mihailov angrily contradicted him. A week later Dimiter was shot in Sofia; his assassin, a former Protogerovist, eluded capture (but not vengeance, for Protogerovists shot him six months later). However, the police "discovered nothing"; so Ivan Mihailov said Dimiter had been killed by Protogerovists at the Yugoslav Military Attaché's instigation and in revenge for Traikov!

Towards midnight on June 8 Simeon Kavrakirov was overpowered in a main street, then forced into a car which drove furiously out of Sofia. Kavrakirov, an opera singer, was secretary of the Salonika immigrants' "brotherhood" and Obidinenist leader; his kidnappers were caught—and fined! His sympathisers organised demonstrations and stoned the police. The National Committee said he had arranged Dimiter Mihailov's assassination!

Everyone assumed Kavrakirov was murdered. But he was Doctor Stanichev's brother-in-law; moreover Ivan Mihailov wanted his "confessions" (in his own hand) because the Obidinenists had become very strong among the immigrants. In December 1932 they were published—in facsimile, by *Makedonia*. They told that OIMRO struggled against Mihailov who had behind him all immigrants and all IMRO! Shandanov had sought Communist and Obidine-nist help but they refused it because he was backed by the "Fascist" Zveno Group which was said to have relations with "the Serbs"; the Protogerovists were "paid by the Serb police": the "Serbian" Military Attaché was in touch with PopTodorov. And so on. Mihailov lumped all anti-Volkovists together, linked them up with Belgrade and Moscow, then redoubled his terror to stifle liberal opinion or talk of friendship with Yugoslavia. Kavrakirov's "revelations" (believed by simple folk) were the *pièce de résistance* of a superb publication (in 1933)—*The Face and Work of the Serbo-Bolshevik Spies and Bandits in Bulgaria . . .*

—which averred that “Zveno wants Protogerovist support in the forthcoming *coup d'état*”.

Kidnapping now became commonplace; but when clues led to Petritch Department the police dropped enquiries. One man escaped to tell how he had been treacherously lured to Drangov's house in Sofia, stunned, carried away, tortured and threatened, made to write a wild statement (like Kavrakirov's) at Mihailov's dictation, then ordered to murder his friends.

On June 30 (1932) Professor Ivan Todorov (who played no part whatever in politics) was shot near the War Office while he was reading another victim's obituary. The assassin, when caught, is said to have told that he had been ordered to kill the deputy Marmev to avenge Kavrakirov, being given a photograph with which to identify him. He had made a mistake. But, since the Obidinenists disbelieved in violence, it seems more probable that Mihailov staged this crime to stir public opinion against them; moreover the assassin was shot dead in gaol before trial by a Mihailovist fellow-prisoner, who said he had found his orders and revolver in the lavatory!

Georgi Kondov had succeeded Dimiter Mihailov as President of the National Committee. On September 1 his bodyguard pointed out Dimiter Tomalevski (a Foreign Office clerk) to three known assassins. The next evening Tomalevski was fired at (from behind, as usual) and fell wounded. His assailant bent over him to make sure he was dead; whereupon Tomalevski suddenly felled him with the butt of his revolver, then flung it aside, intending to arrest the man. But two accomplices then opened fire—there were generally two accomplices to cover the killer's retreat. Tomalevski bolted into a shop as bullets whistled behind him, seized an axe, hid behind the door. But the assassins did not follow. Then he found his shoes were full of blood.

Some weeks later, while Tomalevski was nursing his wounds, the Foreign Minister's Secretary called to tell him he must leave immediately by Orient Express for Istanbul (to take an official post), otherwise nothing would save his life! Tomalevski hastily disguised himself, drove to the station, hid in the station-master's office from terrorists patrolling the platform (for they watched all trains). The train was late. But at last he was safely aboard. The Express was almost empty: thereon Tomalevski remarked to the ticket-collector.

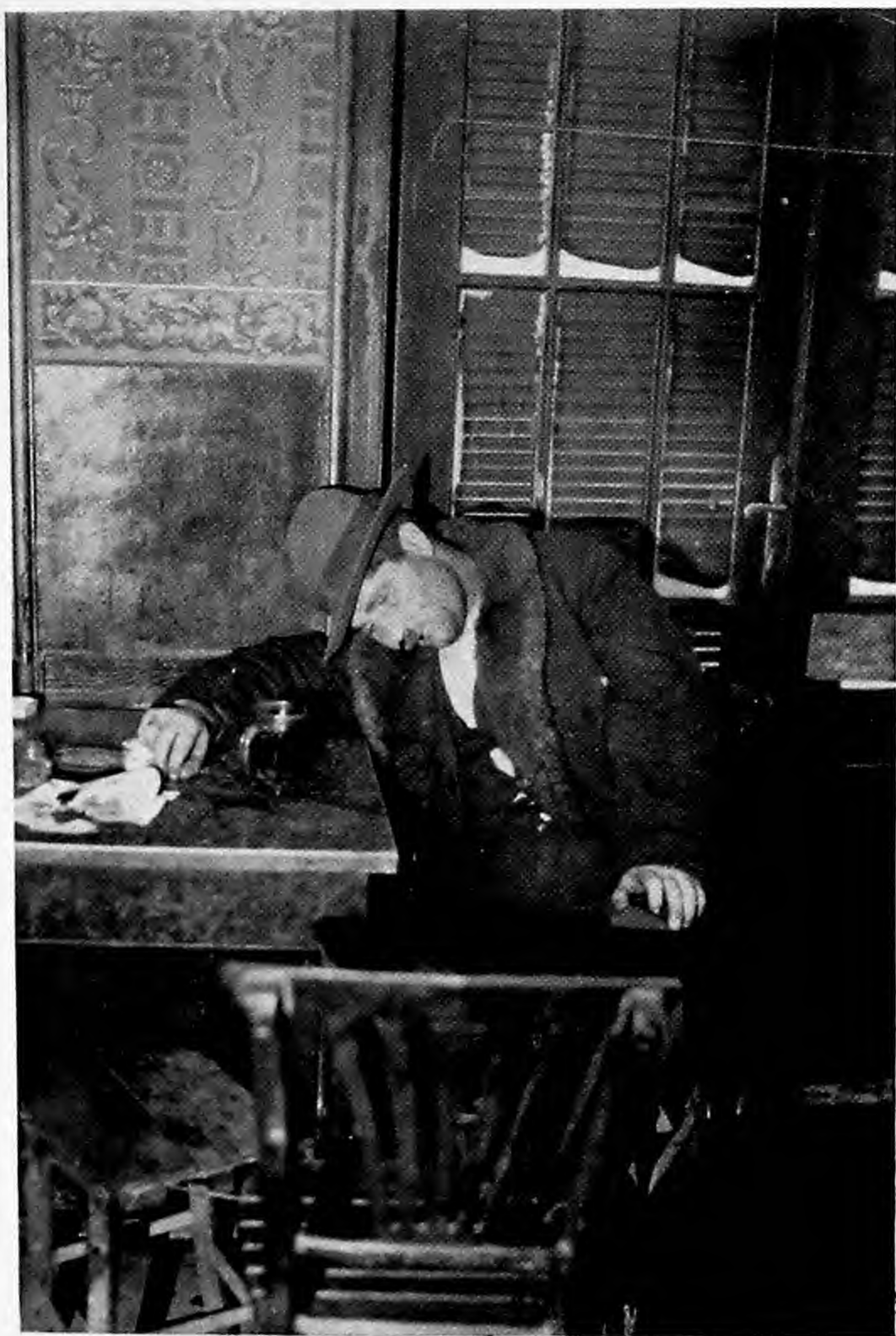
“Nobody wants to travel across a country where people

are shot in streets and trams, and trains are bombed," answered the collector, handing Tomalevski a foreign newspaper containing a list of outrages, among them the attack upon himself!

On September 16 the editor of *Novo Vreme* (Petrov) was shot, though his sister gallantly threw herself at the assassin. Foreign newspapers praised him—but the Italian Press decried him and did *not* mention that a Mihailovist had killed him. Within nine months four leaders of a sporting club fell. Every profession gave victims (labelled Communists or traitors) so that others should hate Yugoslavia. Pacifist films were forbidden. Sub-machine-guns riddled taxis, pitted walls, killed innocent men and women: men shot each other in cafés and trams: bombs were thrown into anti-Mihailovists' houses. Mihailov's *Freedom or Death*, "illegal", but delivered free with unfailing regularity to public men in wrappers bearing the printer's address, brazenly admitted responsibility for each murder but claimed that "nobody is punished without definite proof of guilt".

The Volkovists' failure to prevent the defeat of Liaptchev's Government may account for the report that Italy withheld her annual subsidy to Mihailov in 1931; but after a lull, terrorist outrages were resumed, backed by demonstrations on the frontier to which special (State railway) trains carried passengers at reduced fares. Outrages were frequent now in West Frontier Territory where it was said the Yugoslavs had killed 274 Bulgarians since 1921. Operations here were directed by my friend Ivan Gioshev. A teacher at Tsaribrod until Yugoslavia annexed it in 1919, Gioshev became in 1931 chief of a West Frontier section of Mihailov's Organisation, having his own organ *Vrtop* to tell of his exploits.

In March 1931 Gioshev met Kostadin Yordanov of Tsaribrod. Yordanov had served his time in the Yugoslav Army but had been rejected for the gendarmerie. Angry, he went to Sofia for work. Gioshev bought him a drink: gave him money: then introduced him to Assen Nikolov, lately of the Sofia police, who was "experimenting with explosives" and wanted an assistant. Soon Yordanov was embarked upon "a mission", with promise of reward if he succeeded and death if he failed. Bulgarian authorities helped him over the frontier. On April 26 he left a sack in Nish station waiting-room. A suspicious policeman opened the sack



A typical scene in Sofia during the terrorist outrages. A Protogeroivist shot while at supper, in November, 1931, by "unknown" assassins.

twenty minutes before the bombs it held were timed to go off (when the station would be crowded). Yordanov was caught travelling to Tsaribrod—and confessed.

But it was hard now to cross the frontier. In July the Sofia Press reported the destruction of bridges upon the Nish-Skoplje railway; but the report was premature because the terrorists sent to blow them up were killed before reaching them—sacrificed for Italian imperialism, wrote the Protogerovists!

The Yugoslav Legation in Sofia showed Malinov evidence found upon the dead terrorists which proved they came from Bulgaria, demanding the suppression of Mihailov's Organisation; whereupon Malinov, too honest for compromise, and finding himself powerless against the High Command, resigned on October 12 (1931) "for reasons of health". His place was taken by the Italophile Nikola Mouchanov, who had become Foreign Minister too. Other Democrats, Alexander Girghinov and Stefan Stefanov, became respectively Ministers of Interior and Finance.

Mouchanov worked to thwart any understanding between Balkan States which would strengthen Yugoslavia against Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria; so he would negotiate separately with neighbouring countries but not collectively. In November he went to Turkey: then to Italy, returning to say Bulgaria "supported by Italy, will continue her peaceful policy". He was well backed by Gitchev; but Girghinov (like Malinov) had little sympathy for Italy, nor had Mouraviev and Yordanov. Mouchanov's Cabinet was split between Italophiles and moderates, a split reflected throughout the administration and manifested in the feud between Mihailovists and Protogerovists.

Bulgaria obstructed the unofficial Balkan Conferences (inaugurated by Greece in October 1930) by thrusting forward her demand for minority rights for the Macedonian Slavs, though these conferences were never intended to solve acknowledged differences but to develop common grounds of agreement. Neither Greeks nor Yugoslavs would acknowledge the Macedonian Slavs as Bulgars; but late in 1931 the Albanian Conference Group (doubtless with Italian encouragement) recognised a "Bulgarian Minority" in Albania (about Okhrid and Korcha), agreeing it should have Bulgarian schools and churches: thus implying Albanian acknowledgment that the Slavs between the Albanian and Bulgarian borders were Bulgars too! Liaptchev's Govern-

ment had appointed a highly-paid "inspector" for the solitary Bulgarian school in Albania; yet the Albanian Slavs whom I visited in 1931 speak Albanian and certainly care nothing for "Bulgarian" nationality.

Mouchanov's attitude encouraged violent agitation for treaty revision. November 27, anniversary of the Neuilly Treaty, was always the occasion for organised demonstrations and mourning borders upon the newspapers; but in 1931 demonstrators stoned the Yugoslav Legation—for which Bulgaria had to apologise. So in 1932 the Legation was strongly guarded—though immense piles of stones "for repairing the street" had been dumped before it.

Outrages and clashes upon the frontier continued, Mouchanov generally finding some reason why the Mixed Commission should not investigate them. In October Yugoslavia threatened to call for the League of Nations' intervention; whereupon Mouchanov (while making offensive asides to the Press) answered officially that since Bulgaria "has taken and will continue to take most energetic measures . . . and in view of her goodwill and incontestable loyalty . . . recourse to Geneva would not promote Bulgaro-Yugoslav friendship". Great Britain and France discouraged Yugoslavia from raising this thorny (Italian) problem, but she declined concessions upon her railways to Bulgarian exporters; she was bound to take some retaliatory measure, yet such retaliation played into the Mihailovists' and Italo-philés' hands by further straining relations between the two countries.

Early in 1932 *Freedom or Death* wrote that King Alexander was a bloodthirsty assassin whose end was not far off, abused the Yugoslav Minister, threatened to destroy the Yugoslav Legation. The Yugoslavs demanded satisfaction, whereupon arrests were "ordered"; but nothing was done and *Freedom or Death's* printers "could not be found".

Then Todor Petrov from Tsaribrod "revealed" that he had been sent to Sofia to murder Assen Nikolov and Ivan Gioshev, receiving money and revolver from the Yugoslav Military Attaché. There were mass demonstrations against Yugoslavia throughout Bulgaria! The Sofia Press—in Mihailovist hands or petrified by Mihailovist guns—gave wide publicity to Petrov's story; but the Mihailovists were furious to find many Bulgarians disbelieved it! In October Petrov shot a Yugoslav subject in Sofia. The victim, also from Tsaribrod, had become a loyal Yugoslav—his crime.

At Petrov's trial the Prosecutor said the assassin might have served the Yugoslavs comfortably too "but had preferred the way of Calvary". He was fined £10 and idolised in Sofia!

In September 1932 a parcel of time bombs was found in a railway coach at Nish. The culprit, who was hanged, was a fugitive thief from Tsaribrod to whom Gioshev had promised a terrorist's salary. Captain Prendov had taught him about bombs in a Sofia hotel and given him a false passport.

Then a band under Todor Lazarov was annihilated near Pirot; there was a memorial service in Sofia.

In October a Yugoslav memorandum gave Mouchanov details of eleven outrages by terrorists from Bulgaria during one month. Mouchanov invariably denied that any terrorists had gone from Bulgaria; so he was embarrassed when in December eight terrorists, who attacked a Yugoslav village and kidnapped a villager, were caught by Bulgarian troops under an anti-Volkovist officer after recrossing the frontier near Belogradchik with their captive. Yugoslavia threateningly demanded investigation by the Mixed Commission; whereupon the police hastily took charge of the raiders (except their leader, who "escaped") so that (under Bulgarian Civil Law) they could not be interrogated by Yugoslav officials. Two months later they were liberated, *Vrtop* writing that "Bulgarian justice has ranged itself at the side of those who struggle for liberty".

But terrorism in Yugoslavia was now less important than terrorism in Bulgaria to stem the rising tide in favour of friendship with Yugoslavia. Above all there must be no relaxation of Supremist propaganda in schools under the Agrarian Minister of Education Mouraviev; to that the Departmental Directors under him saw. Mouraviev once received a note bearing the red skull and cross-bones, ordering him to dismiss a hundred "Communist" teachers in Petritch Department. He referred this matter to the War Office.

Since 1928 Petritch Department had been wrapped in mystery. From time to time Protogerovist or Labour papers told of terror, though few dared be seen reading these papers and none repeat their contents. But the Nevrokop Police Commandant disliked terrorists and arranged complete freedom at municipal elections in March 1932. The Mihailovists gained barely 13% of the votes. Three new councillors (one a Moslem representative called Asieb: Bul-

garised to Assiev) went immediately to Sofia to protest against Mihailov's terror. On their way back they were dragged from the 'bus near Bansko by fifteen armed men who took them to the mountains. Two were Democrats and one an Agrarian but the National Committee called them Communists, adding that "700,000 Macedonian refugees" would revolt if the Government interfered!

This affair was narrated by few newspapers; but Kazazov cried (in *Zveno*): "Who rules Bulgaria? Mouchanov's Cabinet or Mihailov's bandits?" The Mihailovists retorted in an article upon "Serbophile treason": calling Kazazov a little viper worse than Judas Iscariot, his friends a "dangerous conspirative group who cry upon the tombs of spies condemned by IMRO": they would have been "brought to justice too if only Marinopolski had not committed suicide. . . . Day and night, in serpents' nests, they forge chains for the people and nails for the crucifixion of the country." Veltchev's growing power protected Kazazov: but Kazazov would not shame Bulgaria by telling whence came Mihailov's power.

Questioned about this outrage the Minister of Interior Girghinov answered: "That district is under martial law so the War Minister must deal with the matter." The War Minister dealt with it in characteristic style. The Mihailovist chiefs retired from Nevrokop and Bansko; then troops proclaimed curfew and searched for arms: though not in Mihailovists' houses, for they sought only the few arms the indignant townsfolk had, before they should rise (as they planned) against the terrorists. Meantime Mihailovists warned Girghinov that they would have no political parties in Petritch Department; they would only release the kidnapped councillors if the Nevrokop Police Commandant was removed, the elections annulled, and fresh elections held at which only Mihailovists should stand. Since the War Minister held all the cards and the Minister of Justice agreed with the Mihailovists, Girghinov reluctantly negotiated with Kourtev at Kustendil. The councillors were released, having given guarantees that they would withdraw from politics. The Police Commandant was transferred.

Mihailov conferred with his deputies and the National Committee, then fresh elections were held in June. But the Nevrokop people—of whom over a hundred and sixty had been murdered in late years—were desperate. Fresh anti-Mihailovist councillors were elected! Assassins immediately

killed one (Narliev) and wounded another. The townsfolk seized what weapons they had to chase the murderers from town but were stopped by troops; in vain they wrote to Girghinov that they lived under terror "worse than Dante's inferno" and inundated Mouchanov with telegrams of protest. The surviving councillors were warned they would be murdered unless they resigned, nor would the new Police Commandant protect them: so they resigned in despair.

Village mayors elected in the neighbourhood who declined to resign were all murdered: nor dared witnesses of these murders speak. Hundreds fled. Many disappeared. Twenty-six school-teachers fled to Sofia begging for protection, but the Minister of Education was powerless: so they dared not return. If people ventured to arrest their tormentors local authorities released and rearmed them—and retaliation followed; if they killed terrorists they would in turn be killed—or arrested, for only Mihailovists might murder. The Mihailovists murdered "Federalists, Communists—or Serb spies": so nothing was said.

After these outrages the officer commanding the district told the War Minister that order ought to be re-established—he could suppress the terrorists in three days. Girghinov, knowing of this report, urged action; whereupon General Kissiov consulted Tsar Boris, then told Girghinov he could order no action. The officer who had proposed it was transferred. It is often said Tsar Boris received Mihailov sometimes—and Mentcha with him once; certainly Tchkatrov boasted that "Tsar Boris protects us". The Tsar's A.D.C. Major Dimitrov, his Chancellor Drandarov, his secretary Naoumov and others of his entourage were Supremist Macedonians; his friends (among them certain Englishmen) glorified Mihailov. These facts seem to confirm Doolaard's opinion that the terrorists were "a government of bandits of whom Tsar Boris is the real chief". He is Supreme Chief of the Army: his High Command supported them: they butchered his subjects and terrorised a corner of his realm. Would it have been unconstitutional to cry stop: or is Tsar Boris a coward?

Being marionettes upon an occult Dictatorship's strings, officials wearing the fancy dress of democracy thought only of themselves. The air of Sofia was rotten: the corruption fostered by Liaptchev's Government became an art: Agrarians and Liberals, split into half a dozen factions, engaged heartily in the national pastime of mud-slinging. Small

wonder there was a drift from the Agrarians towards the Labour-Communists, who gained nineteen of thirty-five seats at Sofia municipal elections in September 1932 (whereupon the elections were annulled).

The Agrarian masses clamoured for enquiry into the previous Governments' conduct and an end of martial law in Petritch Department; they were puzzled and sore against Gitchev who had refused to extend the amnesty (pardoning assassins) to Stamboliski's fugitive Ministers (Nedelko Athanassov, Stoyanov, Obbov and Kosta Todorov), saying their lives (these champions of South Slav Federation) would be unsafe—and secretly fearing they would challenge his leadership on Mihailov's behalf.

But the exiles eventually found an unexpected ally in Mouchanov, who realised their return would further split and weaken the Agrarians who clamoured for more Ministries; so in January 1933 they were amnestied. There were wild demonstrations against these "Serbian spies" when they returned. Volkovists and Tsankovists together inveighed against these "agents of decadent France who . . . shelters under her wing the Jews of the world, and Yugoslavia". Leading clergy called them "adversaries of Bulgarian national and revisionist aspirations". Their existence in Bulgaria was hazardous, their political meetings were often broken up.

Dimov, being under thirty in June 1931, had not been eligible for election to the Sobranié; but in February 1932 he won a by-election by usual methods against anti-Governmental Agrarians. In September Mouchanov suddenly handed the Cabinet's resignation to the Tsar; he immediately received mandate to re-form it, dropping Georghi Yordanov to make place for Dimov! Yordanov, a rugged old man who never wore any but peasant clothes, had hotly charged Gitchev with ingratitude towards the exiled Ministers who had raised a considerable sum among Yugoslav Agrarians for Gitchev's election campaign in 1931.

In December 1932 there was another Cabinet reshuffle, the Minister of Justice Varbenov being ousted; whereupon the three Agrarian Ministers forced Mouchanov to change their Ministries. Mouraviev took Agriculture, instead of Education in which he could do nothing against Supremists who incessantly worried him to dismiss "Communist" teachers; his successor dismissed thousands of them to make way for Supremist "Liberals". Gitchev took Commerce



Cartoon ridiculing Tsar Boris' hesitation during the political crisis which preceded the *coup d'état* in May 1934. Headed: "The consultations are concluded," the underline reads (Tsar Boris addressing palace servant): "I've heard everybody else. Now give me your opinion." (From *Kambana*, May 17, 1934.)

and Industry—whereupon parasite industrialists joined Tsankovists and Volkovists in clamorous outcry against the Agrarians' reviving power.

Dimov's entry into the Cabinet had caused angry comment, for he was said to have organised Agrarian fugitive bands against Tsankov's Government in 1924. So four reserve Generals led by Lazarov (president of the Reserve Officers' Association now) had called upon their colleagues to follow them into Tsankov's ranks to save the country; they opened a political campaign but were chased ignominiously from a village. Their Association found their conduct irregular and elected General Sirmanov in Lazarov's stead. Sirmanov warned Mouchanov against corruption and party bickering: called for the suppression of the Labour-Communist Party: urged radical reforms in the masses' interest: adding that the Army hoped it would not have to intervene again. In April 1933 Sirmanov issued a manifesto calling for National Government; while the War Minister made inflammatory speeches against Communism which were hardly compatible with the Army's professed abstention from politics.

Lazarov's action was strongly disapproved by Veltchev who would have no dealings with Tsankov since he compromised with the Volkovists. Tsankov (inspired by Hitler) was founding a National-Socialist Party to which (when the Rome-Berlin axis cast its shadow before it) the Volkovists rallied under Kojoukharov, grey and malign, who became Tsankov's "sub-Fuhrer"; but Veltchev wanted a purged democracy: fair play for the Agrarians: collaboration with Yugoslavia (finding Yugoslav Federation no shocking bogey). Tsankov shared Veltchev's objection to government by murder simply because he hoped to exploit growing public indignation for his own advantage and believed he could govern better with Storm Troops. Tsankov and Volkov disagreed upon methods; Veltchev disapproved of them both upon principle. For power Tsankov would compromise with the Devil; and he shared the Volkovists' fanatical hatred of the Agrarians who detested him for his role in 1923.

War Minister Kissiov, collaborating with Dimov and Gitchev, followed Volkov's course. Late in January 1933 armed men held up in Petritch Department a train carrying three men, under police escort, to Kustendil for trial for murdering a school-teacher at Mihailovist instigation. The

police were disarmed: the prisoners shot by the line to close their mouths: the authorities warned that the Mihailovists would tolerate no Governmental interference with "justice" in Petritch Department. In this Department under martial law the military made a few arrests to quiet the outcry the affair caused; then the War Minister announced that since those arrested "had been able to prove alibis" they had been liberated. Kissiov was notoriously "the Tsar's man"; when eventually Mouchanov tried to be rid of him to quiet public anger the Tsar flatly declined to supersede him.

The Protogerovists had remained upon the defensive, hoping the new Government would intervene to re-establish order: but their patience was wearing thin. Late on November 25 (1932) the Mihailovist deputy for Nevrokop, Filipov, was attacked in the darkness on his way from the Sobranié; he was wounded in thirteen places and his bodyguard killed. The assassin—from Nevrokop—whose brother Mihailovists had murdered, threw a grenade at a policeman but was caught; a fortnight later he was stabbed to death with a pointed bed-rail by a fellow-prisoner who said he had acted upon orders written in invisible ink. In this typical Sofia street scene stray bullets smashed windows in a passing tram and wounded five innocent people.

The Mihailovist deputies protested angrily, demanding (for the first time!) measures "against the assassins"; but they said nothing about the murder of the Kirdjali Police Commandant some days later by Mihailovists, while the president of the National Committee told me the Mihailovists were "compelled to execute traitors and assassins because the Macedonians had no gaols of their own"! The Protogerovists retorted by declaring their forbearance at an end: they had organised detachments to retaliate against their "intellectual calumniators" who sent assassins against them.

It was no empty threat. On December 28, in the bustle of midday, a crowd of reporters and spectators stood before the Palace, waiting for Mouchanov who was solving a political crisis with Tsar Boris. Round the corner, at a tram stop in the big square, stood five men and a dog. The men were dressed in sporting clothes and carried sporting guns (loaded with buckshot). Simeon Eftimov came by with three bodyguards, going from the editorial office of *La Macedoine* to lunch. As he came abreast of them the

"sportsmen" suddenly discharged their guns full at him and his guards, then whipped out two revolvers apiece. They fired furiously; this was a grand demonstration before Tsar and Government. Eftimov fell mortally wounded; his guards dropped: one dead, the others wounded. A bullet blew the brains from a policeman running to intervene. In the War Office, two hundred yards beyond a public garden, a Colonel looked from a window to see what was to-do and took a bullet in his chest. Four other people were accidentally wounded. Then the "sportsmen" took to their heels in all directions. But one was caught; wounded, he was sent to hospital. There were fifteen patients in his ward, but nurse Katerina Kostadinova showed special care for him. One evening she smoothed his pillow and soothed him to sleep; then she drew a hidden revolver and blew out his brains. By authorities now less compliant she was condemned to twelve years' imprisonment for this "execution by order of IMRO".

Placards all over Sofia told that the Protogerovists had murdered Eftimov at Belgrade's order, a Mihailovist paper adding: "Even after Eftimov's assassination people still dream of an Integral Yugoslavia". The German President of our Foreign Correspondents' Association telegraphed condolences to the National Committee in the Association's name (and I was constantly at loggerheads with German, Hungarian, Italian and Bulgarian colleagues who exploited the Association for propaganda). The German Official Newsagency alleged Yugoslav complicity in all such attacks upon "legal Macedonian workers": adding that the Protogerovists had Russian support and foretelling a "struggle between the Comintern and IMRO" far transcending Bulgaro-Yugoslav relations in importance!

Eftimov's funeral became a frantic demonstration against Malinov and Girghinov. Some 20,000 immigrants were compelled to march behind the open bier and sing a hymn upon their knees where Eftimov fell. The Government was warned that unless it "awoke to its responsibilities" there would be "grave consequences". Bulgaria had become "a land of national dishonour", so Eftimov's body was carried in state to Petritch Department for burial beside Alexandrov (an honour accorded also to Paraspourov—shot in April: this "good man" having been chief organiser of murders in Sofia).

Italy's relations with Yugoslavia had been dangerously

strained by the Lions of St. Mark incident at Trau (in December 1932), so Mihailovist propaganda against Yugoslavia became particularly offensive. In January another Petrov made "revelations", this time that a Yugoslav Legation official had engaged him to murder an Agrarian deputy who wrote in favour of Yugoslav Federation: the idea being to show Agrarians that the Yugoslavs would even kill their friends to cause disorders! The official told me Petrov had called frequently: begging for work, even as assassin; but had he been delivered to the police this would have been "an invention to discredit a worthy citizen"! *Makedonia* illustrated this story with photographs of some (unrecognisable) individual entering the Yugoslav Consulate (whereupon *Makedonia* was "confiscated", which greatly helped its sales). The National Committee's president asked me to believe that the Yugoslavs paid their hirelings *by cheques*, of which the National Committee had the numbers and the National Bank the originals! Simple folk believed such tales.

Macedonian immigrant (Federalist) deputies of the Labour Party, opponents of the plan to "liberate" Macedonia with Italian aid, were marked down for extinction. Eight Labour deputies—among them Ivan Martulkov, Christo Traikov and Alexander Naoumov—had been deprived of parliamentary immunity and prosecuted. Naoumov, for writing three articles, was heavily fined and imprisoned for ten years: but the court acquitted the others. Whereupon Martulkov was shot (mortally) on January 12 and Traikov killed ten days later. The police arrested no assassins but buried Traikov themselves to prevent demonstrations—though nobody had interfered with Eftimov's funeral. Malinov boldly protested at this crime against a "friend and colleague". Traikov had been warned against "demoralising" the immigrants by calling for better conditions and observance of the eight-hour day Convention (hitherto ignored in practice): which by Bulgarian measure, proved him a very Red Communist; he had answered that he followed Deltchev's ideals. The business classes found Mihailov's terrorists useful!

In April the Agrarians (with Volkovist support) voted the exclusion from the Sobranié of the remaining twenty-nine Labour deputies. A month later the Party's Secretary, Petko Napetov, was shot in Sofia; but though the assassins were caught (one of them Kavrakirov's kidnapper) nobody

dared witness against these War Office agents. Napetov had no connection whatever with Macedonian revolutionary activities, yet this was officially (as usual) "a Macedonian affair". Several more "leading Communists"—one a leader of immigrants from Dobrudja—shared Napetov's fate. One victim's family dumped his body before Police Headquarters, crying that those who murdered him must bury him. When two "Communist" girl students and a boy were hideously murdered by officers at Shumen, none of the nineteen witnesses dared speak and the War Minister blatantly found alibis for the perpetrators. Such methods of Government drove the oppressed to conspiracy; so there were innumerable tales of plots in schools and barracks and clashes between "Communist" and "Nationalist" students.

On February 12 the Mihailovists held at Gorna Djoumaia what they called an Extraordinary Congress. It was. Officially it was an immigrants' Congress; their delegates came with their banners from all over Bulgaria, having 75% reductions of (State) railway fares and holidays on pay if they were officials. The word went round beforehand that the Mihailovists would declare for Macedonian unity and independence, thinking thus to rally the immigrants in Italy's interest; whereupon the Officers' League, feeling this farce had gone far enough, apparently urged that the Congress should be prevented; however, the Tsar conferred with Mouchanov—and nothing happened.

I was (reluctantly) invited to the Congress with other Correspondents, being entertained by Mara Buneva's brother. Perhaps 10,000 men and women herded into the public square where the Congress opened, cheering automatically at appropriate moments. The Bishop of Nevrokop (attended by thirty-six priests) opened the proceedings with a service, the Garrison Commander Colonel Nedev and all members of the National Committee being present. Then Tchkatrov read an inflammatory message from Mihailov: the Croat, Marko Doschen, a message from Pavlitch urging the break-up of the "Yugoslav mosaic": Doctor Assen Tatartchev (an affluent fugitive agitator from South Serbia) a petition he had lodged at Geneva enumerating Yugoslav misdeeds.

Mihailov's message (said to have been brought by breathless courier from South Serbia) declared the "sublime moment" for Macedonian liberation at hand and foretold



Peasant women of Bulgaria. (*Left*) A mother and child in Bansko. (*Right*) A market scene near Troyan.



Lambert Photo Libraries.

that soon everyone would express his views freely at a constituent assembly in independent Macedonia; but "to their shame before history and the world", leading Bulgarians protected "traitors" in Sofia, where "Serbomania" was taking root. Against these "blows from Sofia", which might split the *Bulgarian Nation* no less disastrously than the barbed wire along the frontier, a defensive front had been formed; IMRO would struggle against those "bought politicians": and against the Communists, who opposed nationalism too. Against the Yugoslav Government—to which "we can speak only in the language of rifles and bombs"—the struggle would continue "with fire and blood".

With this earful my colleagues returned to Sofia—except my excellent friend of the Italian *Stefani* Agency, who was telegraphing thousands of words to excited Italy. I stayed with him; but being less busy, I strolled across the now empty and snow-swept square to a café for coffee with Gioshev and other celebrities: the while *Bulagence* assured the world that neither revolutionaries nor officials had attended the Congress!

That evening a banquet at the Military Club honoured the chief performers. There was Tchkatrov: Alexandrov's old mother (blissfully ignorant that she sat with accomplices of her son's murderers): Philip Manolov (Secretary-General of the Ministry of Education and vice-President of the National Committee): Marko Doschen: the Bishop of Nevrokop: Mihailov's deputies: Thracian, Dobrudjan and West Frontier immigrants' representatives: and many more, myself included. A woman toasted the mothers of those who had died or "were about to die for Macedonia". The Bishop spoke of the Church's solidarity with *Bulgarian Nationalism*. The National Committee's President, Kondov, declared that though *the Macedonians* could rely no longer upon Bulgarian Governments, they felt sure of the Army's support: to which the Garrison Commander, who presided, answered that the Bulgarian Army was ready to "liberate" Macedonia for a third time when the opportunity came. There was loud applause. Then we sprang to our feet to shout the revolutionary song which crashed from a military band: and the hardly less stirring Bulgarian National Anthem. The gist of the speeches, I noted then, was for "the union of Bulgaria with a Macedonia liberated from Serb tyranny by the glorious Bulgarian

Army". The War Minister was irritated to hear I had attended this melodramatic banquet.

The Protogerovists declared this Congress a manœuvre to drag Bulgaria into a perilous adventure to serve foreign interests; but the semi-official *La Bulgarie* hailed it enthusiastically, reproducing the speeches and Tatartchev's petition: declaring that unless "the Bulgarians of Macedonia" obtained minority rights, world peace and civilisation would be jeopardised. Certain newspapers began a violent revisionist agitation: the National Committee placarded Sofia with exhortations to immigrants to prepare, because Yugoslavia's disintegration and the hour of "liberation" were at hand. Mihailovists said that certainly, if Macedonia was not "liberated" within two years, they would provoke European War—"as the Serbs did at Sarajevo".

In Belgrade a sudden Bulgarian attack (backed by Italy) was feared. But on February 16 Yugoslavia concluded with Roumania and Czechoslovakia the Little Entente Pact of Reorganisation; then (with Greek support) she warned Bulgaria (on February 27) that since the Bulgarian authorities' and legal Macedonian organisations' solidarity with the revolutionaries had been so evident at a Congress which openly threatened warlike acts, the Bulgarian Government would be held responsible for further outrages: unofficially hinting that if the Government still protested powerlessness to crush the terrorists, Yugoslavia and her allies would "place their own troops at its disposal" for that purpose. Mouchanov replied that it was "impossible to support the theory that Bulgarian authorities gave proof of any benevolence towards an illegal organisation"! The Tsar is said to have told somebody who urged suppression of the terrorists that he "would not please the Serbs and Greeks".

Thus encouraged, the revolutionaries contrived thirty-four outrages in South Serbia during the year, Yugoslavia patiently enduring. When in April five raiders carrying time bombs were shot, large posters bearing their portraits and obituaries were plastered all over Sofia. In May the Belgrade police caught two terrorists with four time bombs destined for the Shkupstina and railway station; when they were hanged *Freedom or Death* published their portraits. In June bombs went off in Nish—almost harmlessly; but the Bulgarian Press wrote eagerly that "according to private information" there were many military and civil victims. The *Ustacha* was very active too.

Meanwhile the feud raged ever more furiously in Sofia. In January the Protogerovists had agreed to a truce proposed by Generals (of reserve) Sirmanov and Midilev, but declined capitulation; whereupon the Mihailovists attacked two Protogerovists, said they had fired first, then broke off negotiations. The Protogerovists waited several weeks, then wrote that since Eftimov's death had not checked their assailants who continued to attack them, they would resume reprisals.

Several newspapers had begun the call for an end of anarchy—though only the Veltchevist and Zveno Group's organs dared indict the Mihailovists. With this public support, Girghinov induced the Government to pass laws prohibiting the importation of explosives "for private purposes" and the bearing of arms without licences, while gradually directing the police to greater impartiality against assassins. On April 20, five Mihailovists and three Protogerovists were arrested for shooting at each other in Sofia, having between them fifteen revolvers and three grenades. The District Court found the Protogerovists had defended themselves, so condemned the Mihailovists to ten years' imprisonment; whereupon *Makedonia* wrote angrily that since the National Committee had repeatedly urged the obliteration of Protogerovist "spies and traitors" in vain, the "nationalists" were inclined to accept "their friends' proposal that IMRO should be invited to transfer its sphere of activities and clean up Sofia in twenty-four hours"! Since *Makedonia* had always claimed that IMRO existed only in Yugoslavia and nobody could cross the Black Frontier, this threat seemed a trifle inconsistent! *The Government were now "wicked Supremists" planning to control IMRO!*

Learning the Protogerovist leaders were going to the provinces, the Mihailovists laid ambushes upon all roads from Sofia. During the night of May 12 a machine-gun upon Araba Konak Pass fired at PopTodorov's car, mortally wounding one of his companions. Three nights later Anastas Naoumov left Sofia with three friends. Upon Petrohan Pass their car's headlights showed a charabanc standing in their road. As they reached it sub-machine-guns and revolvers spat bullets, grenades exploded all about them. Their chauffeur was blown to bits, another man riddled: but Naoumov and the other survivor, having emptied their revolvers, dashed for cover, eventually hiding up a tree until daybreak.

Between May 11 and 31 the *Press* reported twenty political outrages, nine people being killed in Sofia and five in the provinces. In the first twenty-four days of June there were twenty-three, in which the death roll was eighteen in Sofia and three in the provinces. Among the killed was a bank director at Vidin: a National Bank official, shot in a main Sofia street at midday by a Mihailovist who threw grenades at pursuers (wounding an unwilling onlooker who had been hit in a previous affray too): and a lawyer who was shot from behind (by mistake for somebody else) while playing cards in a crowded Sofia café. But on June 17 a newspaper wrote: "Yesterday there was no murder in our capital. This is sensational!"

By other statistics compiled from the *Press* (which ignored many incidents, nor mentioned murders in Petritch Department) there were 45 murderous attacks in 1932 (most of them in Sofia), the Mihailovists attacking in 34 of them: 16 Mihailovists and 6 Protogerovists being detained by the police, though few actually went to gaol; and there fell by Mihailovist bullets 17 Protogerovists, 2 "Communists", 2 unclassified persons and 2 killed by error; while the Protogerovists killed 11 Mihailovists and 2 by mistake. The Mihailovists wounded 3 Protogerovists and one person by error: the Protogerovists 3 Mihailovists and 6 by error.

But in the first half of 1933 there were 58 attacks, the Mihailovists attacking in 42 cases, 14 Mihailovists and 5 Protogerovists being detained. The Mihailovists killed 15 Protogerovists, 7 "Communists", 6 persons for unknown reasons and 7 in error; while Protogerovists shot 13 Mihailovists and 1 by mistake. The Mihailovists wounded 8 Protogerovists, 2 Communists, and 4 people by mistake, while 2 Mihailovists and one other were wounded by Protogerovists. In the same period the Mihailovists are known to have kidnapped 10 persons, the Protogerovists 2. That most murders happened in Sofia was because there alone (beyond the protection of martial law) the Mihailovists predominated. In Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second largest town, they had barely a foothold among 50,000 immigrants, most of whom repudiated the National Committee.

But the international situation was turning against Bulgaria. Mouchanov realised old methods must be dropped or Bulgaria would have the world's contempt; moreover Veltchev's friends were threatening. So the *Press* suddenly ended its conspiracy of silence, allowing public indignation

to overflow into columns upon columns in most parties' daily papers. Mouchanov planned a bluff; but Girghinov, very much in earnest, prepared suitable legislation; whereupon Gitchev and Dimov raised clamorous demand for the Ministry of Interior (because Girghinov had failed to stop murders!) and called for the arrest of the Protogerovist "traitors"!

The Mihailovists now smothered the streets with a menacing leaflet headed: "Those who support the traitors": furiously attacking the Democrats; Malinov put "the traitors' band" upon the same level as the "Macedonian Movement for Liberation": Girghinov "collected under his wing all accomplices in Panitza's crimes, former and actual Communists, and various categories of vagabonds . . . to assassinate helpless legal Macedonian workers": the Democrat Police Director called Petritch "the bandits' Department, though this region has been acknowledged by Bulgarian citizens, writers, journalists, former and present Ministers, as the only region in which good public order exists". And so forth. A rich Mihailovist told me there should be a St. Bartholomew's Eve, to purge Sofia of Serbophiles!

But the re-organised Officers' League, having now two-thirds (1,600) of the serving officers upon its strength, was behind Girghinov. On June 22, with his evident connivance, Colonel (rtd.) Karakoulakov was sent to the Tsar; he represented Zveno and belonged to the League's Political Secretariat too.

"Your Majesty," he said quietly but firmly, "is morally responsible for the assassinations. They must stop. You must order the Army to suppress Mihailov's terrorists."

The Tsar, furious, called for Girghinov and told him at last that if he felt strong enough he might take appropriate measures in Sofia.

Next day Girghinov introduced legislation. Mihailov's deputies again urged the arrest of the "little group of traitors", protesting that Mihailovist killings were a "lamentable necessity". Girghinov retorted that "the organisation which believes it has justice and morality on its side should not need to murder": adding that "at the risk of his life this Minister will remain at his post", acting impartially against all assassins. It was courageous of him, for his life had been openly threatened.

Girghinov proposed death for assassins and for all ordering or attempting assassinations, regardless of motives.

Assassins' names were generally well known and there was only a handful of them anyway; so a few executions would discourage hirelings: their fees would become prohibitive. But the law required the Tsar's signature to death warrants; the Tsar would never sign, however, thus in practice protecting and encouraging murderers. Yet Mouchanov (though with great difficulty) over-ruled an amendment annulling this royal prerogative in the case of assassins, thereby depriving Girghinov's legislation of its value.

Going home in the evening of June 24 I passed a dozen police before Girghinov's house. Later, I heard troops moving; I supposed there were night manoeuvres. But next morning all was strangely still. From my window I looked down upon a soldier's white cap and gleaming bayonet. My telephone was dead. Soon after midnight troops had quietly occupied streets and public buildings. Throughout Sunday none but diplomats, high officials, troops and police might stir; nobody might telephone. There were pickets at all street corners, ordered to fire at anyone disobeying them: and no sane man argues with a Bulgarian sentry! Travellers arriving by train were confined to Sofia station. Broadcasting company officials, sent to their station to amuse subscribers, amused them doubly towards evening by piteously appealing for food.

Mixed patrols of soldiers and police searched from house to house to confiscate arms illegally held and purge the capital of suspects. They turned up mattresses and peered up chimneys; but there were no untoward incidents. It was a grand demonstration of military efficiency: but it was a farce. Although orders for this blockade were not issued to subordinates until midnight, the gangster leaders were all warned beforehand by friends in high places: so a string of cars drove away to Petritch Department late in the evening of the 24th. A brief list of those to be arrested included no single individual of importance. Drangov did not bother to leave Sofia: he was caught, but immediately liberated again. The police said 1,154 persons had been found without proper identity cards: but of these only 43 were detained, among them 25 "Communists"; of arms, 600 revolvers, 250 rifles, 200 grenades, 1 time-bomb and 1 sub-machine-gun had been confiscated: figures calculated to justify the blockade yet not cause a stir abroad. But I learnt that actually troops found in Mihailovist store-rooms 4,000 rifles: 80 automatic rifles: 200 police uniforms: 16,000 "eggs for the children"

—as the terrorists 'called grenades: certainly enough to "clean up" Sofia!

This sledge-hammer operation against a few terrorists preserved the myth of Mihailovist power. But in fact the assassinations were stopped by play-acting. As a preliminary, the Democrat Police Director resigned "for reasons of health"; he was succeeded by Colonel Khalatchev of the Royal Guard.

The dates are interesting. On July 4 the National Committee (still pretending neutrality) published an appeal in *Makedonia* (a) to the Government, to guarantee "legal Macedonians' " safety: (b) to "IMRO", to renew its undertaking that it would do nothing further against those who ceased to conspire against it or "the movement for Macedonian liberation": (c) to all groups and individuals working against the "Macedonian organisations" to stop doing so. *Makedonia* commented that "all eyes are turned across the frontier, whence IMRO's reply is anxiously expected".

Late on July 8 the police, ostensibly hunting for an escaped prisoner, "happened to catch" Lef Glavinchev. Next morning, while still hunting for the escaped prisoner, they surrounded a suburban house and called upon the inmates to come out or be blown out. They surrendered. Their names—undisclosed for several days—were Shandanov, Shkartov and Tcheganski—the Protogerovist fighting wing. PopTodorov was taken in the provinces. Was it by chance that we Correspondents were upon a provincial tour with the Minister of Agriculture? It was not by chance that there now descended a shower of Italian decorations upon Ministers and Police Chiefs!

On July 11 "IMRO's reply" was (widely) published, carefully ante-dated July 8: for it came from Mihailov's (imaginary) headquarters beyond the frontier and so was supposedly uninfluenced by the Protogerovists' arrest! IMRO would not again attack its guilty enemies provided they promised, within fifteen days, to discontinue their activities. On the 18th the Protogerovists answered; they deplored fratricide: denied connection with the Zveno Group, the Communists, or other parties: declared they would never resume assassinations if not provoked or attacked. They maintained their private opinions however. To this unsubmitive reply *Makedonia* retorted with further abuse of the "spies . . . common murderers . . . allies of Zveno and the Communists": threatening them if they did

not mend their ways. But that was the end. High places had decreed that assassinations in Sofia should cease; redoubled official action against Communists should be the system now. The rest was dust in the public's blind eye.

A few Mihailovists of no importance were interned at Lovetch for form's sake, the Protogerovist leaders at Karlovo; but in January the four Protogerovists escaped one dark night, probably helped by military sympathisers.

During August a bomb was thrown at Tsankov in a village. The affair, never cleared up, was attributed by Tsankov to Agrarian enemies: who retorted that he had staged it himself to prove a danger from "the Left". Save isolated cases, political murders now went out of fashion however; bodyguards were unemployed: the Press published opinions hitherto only whispered to intimate friends. But Petritch Department remained under martial law, a terrorist stronghold, a menace alike to Bulgarian moderation and European peace.



A band returning to Bulgaria after a raid into Yugoslavia during 1933.

CHAPTER XI

THE NINETEENTH OF MAY

THE Convention Defining the Aggressor had caused panic in Sofia. Published on May 24, 1933, it was signed in London on July 3 by Yugoslavia, Roumania, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland and Russia. It defined as aggressor any State which (among other things) supports armed bands invading another State and takes no measures against them. Clearly Bulgaria must change her policy! Many Bulgarians urged Mouchanov to sign the Convention too: but he made lame excuses, then disappeared upon an excursion with the Italian Minister.

Upon the day the Convention was signed Tsar Boris unexpectedly went abroad. It was angrily denied that he went for political reasons! However, he sounded the Western Powers; but none, not even Italy (now secretly planning her Abyssinian venture), was prepared to support Bulgarian adventures. So he was obliged to yield to the growing movement in Bulgaria (loudly vocal since assassinations ceased) for friendship with Yugoslavia; moreover he was scared by the Officers' League—already it was whispered that the League would place Veltchev at the helm. On September 17, 1933, Tsar Boris, on his way home, met King Alexander (for the first time since the War) at Belgrade station.

Yugoslavia had made repeated overtures to Bulgaria. In April a delegation of clergy led by the Archbishop of Okhrid had been welcomed in Sofia, though Italophiles and Ex-archist pretenders to the Sees of Okhrid and Skoplje had howled against "these usurpers"; then Yugoslavia lent railway vans to carry Bulgarian grapes abroad. France played a hand by sending M. Herriot with an imposing French delegation to the International Radical-Democratic Congress at Sofia in August; whereupon the Italophiles showed their irritation by erecting a bell-tower near Tsaribrod and tolling the bell daily to remind "Bulgarians beyond the frontier that the day of their freedom approaches".

But Bulgaria obstinately refused to renounce revisionist claims; so her neighbours ultimately concluded pacts among themselves to thwart those claims. Then she squealed for sympathy. Her relations with Turkey had been chilled in the spring by violation of a Turkish graveyard at Razgrad and indiscreet declarations that the new Haskovo-Mastanli railway would lead ultimately to a Bulgarian port upon the Aegean. The declarations, threats to Greece whom Turkey preferred to Bulgaria along the lower Maritza, inspired the Greco-Turkish Pact, concluded at Ankara on September 14 and guaranteeing their common frontier. Bulgaria had declined to join. A week afterwards the Turkish Prime and Foreign Ministers visited Sofia: but their conciliatory speeches were received in frigid silence, though Bulgaria did at the last renew the Treaty of Neutrality and Arbitration concluded with Turkey in 1929. Supremist irritation was vented upon the Turkish and Pomak minorities. The Pomaks in the Rhodope Mountains planned revolt and mass emigration into Greek Thrace: but the plan was betrayed. This affair was veiled in mystery and mountain mists and my efforts to penetrate them thwarted by police enthusiasm for my company. Then persecution redoubled. From Petritch Department alone, a hundred and ten families were said to have emigrated secretly during the winter; but several groups were intercepted and shot down by Bulgarian frontier patrols.

The Greco-Turkish Pact rebuff and the world slump in agricultural products (which made Yugoslav rail facilities for Bulgaria's perishable exports essential) strengthened the arguments of those urging friendship with Yugoslavia; nor could the pioneers of this movement be called "traitors, spies and Serb agents" now Tsar Boris had (perforce) joined it.

At a great meeting on September 24 Petar Todorov outlined the Zveno Group's foreign policy. Stamboliski, whatever his faults, had followed a sane course, said Todorov; but when Tsankov had tried to follow it too he had been overthrown by the Supremists, backed by the "Supreme Factor" whose Ministers were hardly more than his clerks. Foreign policy must no longer be conducted in mediæval style—by the Tsar—but by responsible Ministers. If the Tsar was a constitutional monarch he would accept his Ministers' decisions; but if he dabbled in politics he descended from his high place, becoming a statesman who must accept

responsibilities and expect criticism. Bulgaria must cease to rely upon Italy and follow invincible Great Britain, concluded Todorov.

Behind Todorov's words lay a widespread conviction that Tsar Boris had pledged Bulgaria to Italy and Germany: that his relations with Yugoslavia were insincere. The Italophiles still held the War Office; terrorist raids continued. In the second half of 1933 the Yugoslavs reported fifteen attempts to cross the frontier, which were frustrated by Yugoslav patrols. During the late summer too, raiders led by The Son of the Door Weight, The Chaffinch, and The Son of the Dog-keeper (their names, translated), passing through Greece, had left a time bomb in a parcel beneath a newspaper upon a Gevgheli café table; the explosion, boasted Mihailovists, wrecked the café and killed ten "Serbs". Then the raiders blew up a section of railway; but they were pursued and killed upon Mount Kaimakchalan, whereupon *Freedom or Death* published their portraits. There were incidents upon the Roumanian border too.

But the Little Entente was patient. After its Conference at Sinaia, King Alexander and Queen Marie visited Tsar Boris and Queen Giovanna at Varna on October 3—anniversary of the Tsar's accession. Next came the Roumanian Foreign Minister to Sofia; then on October 31 Tsar Boris and King Carol met with their respective Ministers upon the Danube at Rustchuk. But on October 26 the Hungarian Premier General Goemboes and Foreign Minister de Kanya were enthusiastically welcomed in Sofia, torchlight demonstrations of bellicosity against Yugoslavia being organised; then Mouchanov talked again of "our legitimate rights—minority rights" as the price of Bulgaria's hand. On December 10, however, Tsar Boris, Queen Giovanna and Mouchanov were warmly welcomed in Belgrade; a month later they visited King Carol at Sinaia. Undoubtedly Tsar Boris knew Italy's plans now precluded Balkan adventures; so he worked to forestall a Bulgarian revolt against the Italophiles and take the wind from the Zveno Group's sails by leading a reconciliatory policy with Bulgaria's neighbours, though restraining friendship with Yugoslavia within the bounds of correct relations.

But Bulgaria, though professing loyalty to the Peace Treaties, declined to renounce Treaty Revision; yet Greece feared a South Slav *entente*. The Italian Minister told me once that Italy might connive at Yugoslav seizure of

Salonika, provided Yugoslavia acknowledged Italian supremacy in the Adriatic: adding that Italy would prefer Bulgaria to Greece upon the Dardanelles. Greece feared precisely this; so she pressed for a Balkan Pact with or without Bulgaria; nor was Bulgaria's incipient and problematic friendship enough to hold Yugoslavia back. The Balkan Pact, initialled in Belgrade on February 4, was formally signed at Athens on February 9, 1934, by Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey and Roumania; it mutually guaranteed territorial integrity and military collaboration against an aggressor (as defined by the London Convention). *La Macedoine* subsequently "discovered" a protocol, signed in Belgrade on March 27, providing for invasion of Bulgaria within forty-eight hours if she declined to suppress the terrorist organisations when called upon; occupied territories would be evacuated when the organisations had been destroyed, unless the inhabitants thereof opted for union with the invading States.

Though this Pact's value in case of general war is problematical it irritated Italy, exasperated the Supremists. Mouchanov—perhaps to stir Germany—announced Bulgaria's intention to renew relations with Russia. Herr Nadolny, in Sofia during October, had declared that "Germany's success will be equally Bulgaria's"; moreover Tsar Ferdinand lived still. Tsar Boris went now to Berlin, Mouchanov in May; then Germany (Bulgaria's best customer) began suddenly to make economic concessions. On May 17 Mouchanov announced that General Goering was about to visit Sofia.

Yugoslavia strove to allay Bulgaria's irritation at the Balkan Pact. King Alexander escorted Tsar Boris through Yugoslavia; then on May 7 Foreign Minister Yevtitch visited Sofia. There were great precautions for Yevtitch's safety; but it seemed incredible to find fierce enmity changed to fraternity at official word, the streets decked with Yugoslav flags. Minor problems were discussed. Yevtitch assured me that if relations improved the terrorist Organisation would disappear; but the Organisation had not yet disappeared.

Punctually at midnight, while a grand reception was honouring Yevtitch, the capital was plunged into darkness (for three-quarters of an hour). Mounted police galloped to the club where the reception was, their horses' hoofs striking showers of sparks from the cobbles. But nothing followed.

Next morning the remains of a black cat were exhibited at the power station as the cause of the black-out. Many felt it must have been touching to see that noble puss sitting with his eye upon his wrist watch, then leaping punctually and unflinchingly to death among the dynamos—for The Cause!

On February 1 *La Macedoine* and *La Bulgarie* had published a declaration from Mihailov, Kourtev, and Nastev, threatening to resume "the campaign for the liberation of Macedonia in bondage in the only possible way . . ." unless minority rights were granted to the Macedonian Slavs; then in March there were several frontier incidents, several terrorists being shot by Yugoslav patrols. There were inflammatory articles, offensive references to King Alexander, talk of a "Serb" conspiracy against Tsar Boris. *Mir* urged the suppression of *Makedonia*, the Agrarian *Pladné* and the Communist *Echo*: whereupon *Makedonia* retorted that some Judas, writing to Pontius Pilate *Mir*, wished to crucify the National Committee's paper between two thieves! The National Committee cried again for minority rights to enable "the Macedonians to work for independence by peaceful means": then produced another witness of "Yugoslav oppression", Engineer Petrov, who said he had been obliged to fly from South Serbia after talks with Ben Riley and Rhys Davies (M.P.s) in September 1932. Like Tatartchev, Petrov seemed rather an affluent agitator than ruined fugitive.

Though the terrorists no longer murdered in Sofia, they kidnapped—and murdered elsewhere. In October 1933 they kidnapped a former deputy for Tsaribrod, incarcerating him in a tobacco warehouse near Kustendil; but he grabbed his gaoler's revolver and fled to some peasants who escorted him to the police. An English girl visiting Gorna Djoumaia, suspected as a Russian agent because she had travelled in Russia, was robbed of her passport and valuable notes: nor would the police interfere!

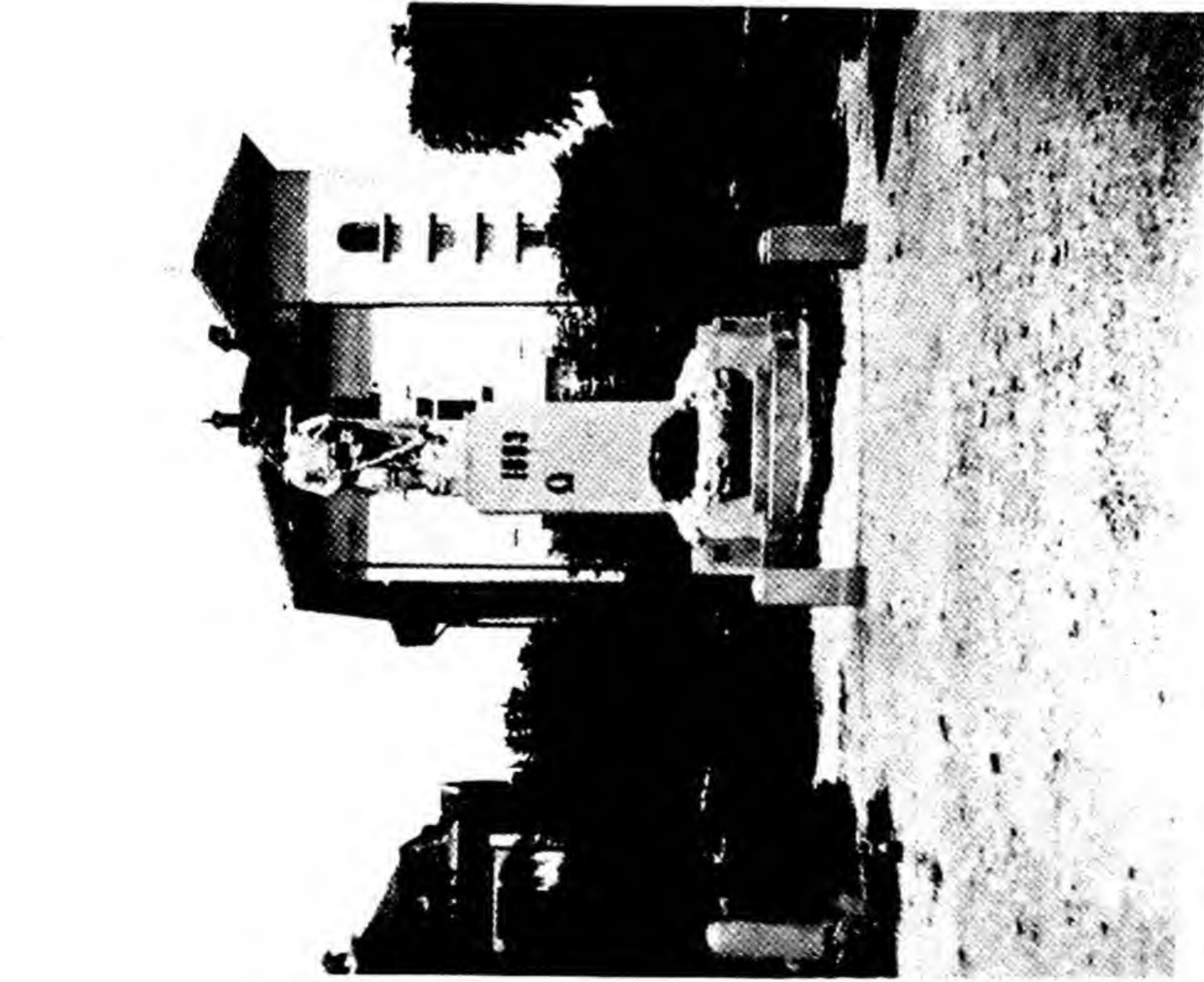
While Mihailov's Organisation existed there was a constant temptation to use it. In October the Reserve Officers' and N.C.O.s' Associations had held congresses in Petritch Department, calling for minority rights in South Serbia and an outlet to the Aegean. During April (1934) General Jekov toured the Department. Then the rumour (afterwards confirmed) spread that Volkovists planned to mobilise the Macedonian militia and seize Sofia (on May 23); units

were inspected: detachments held regular manœuvres, learning to blow up bridges and troop trains.

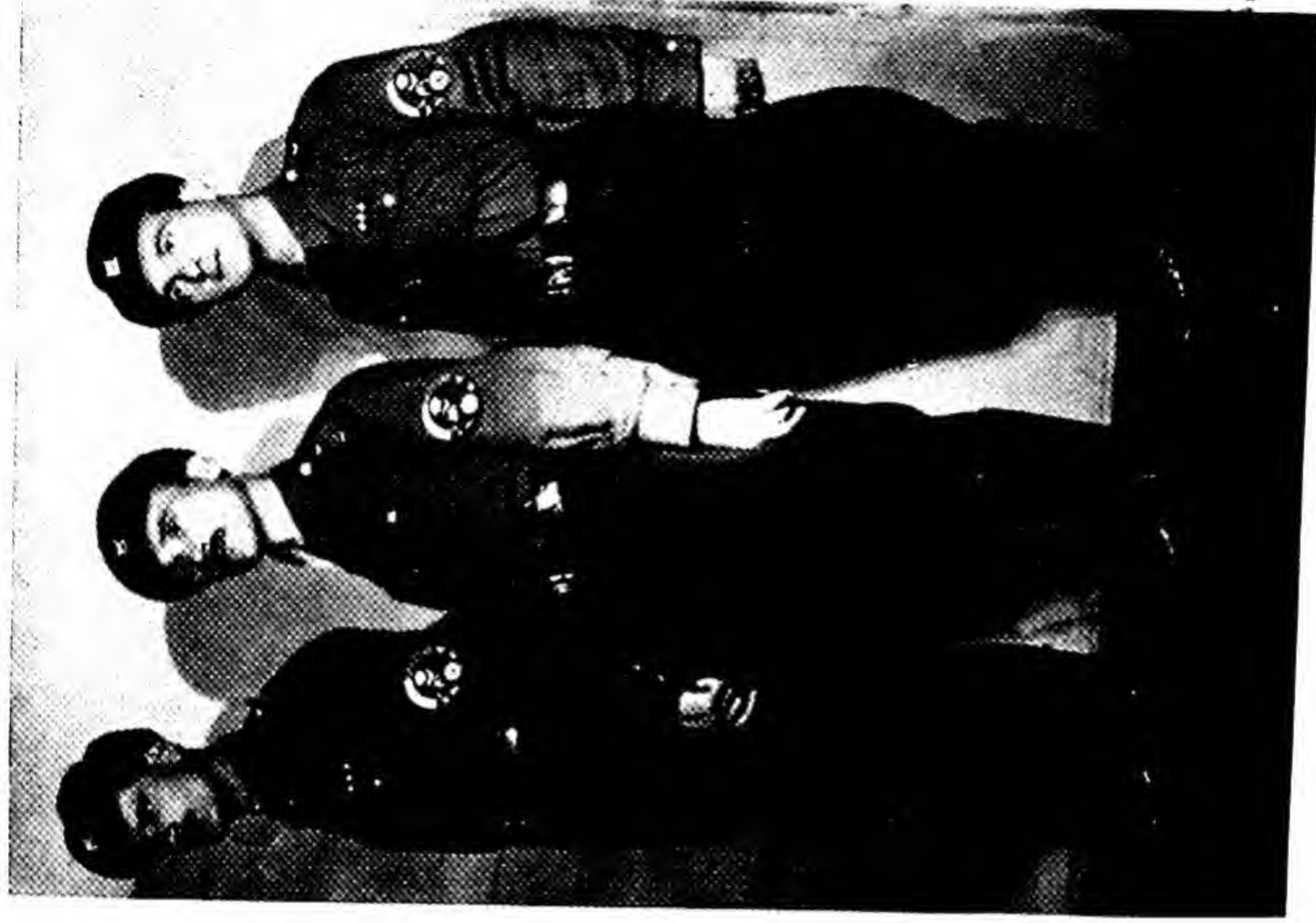
"Taxation for The Cause" continued too. In August 1933 Kourtev wrote of "love-letters" sent to forty-two firms or individuals all over Bulgaria (only some of them Macedonians) demanding sums ranging from 100,000 to 10,000,000 *leva*; but on December 8 Nastev reported that there had been no response, so "we must take measures against one of them as a warning". In February 1934 Bunev told an agent in Stanimaka to order somebody to pay 1,000,000 *leva* within fifteen days or "be judged according to the Organisation's laws". On May 14 fresh "taxation" of goatskins and cattle hides in Petritch Department was decreed; but in January the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Agriculture had presented timber to the Macedonian Cultural and Economic Council which was sold for "cultural and economic needs"—so that the terrorists might show beneficence by building a hospital! Early in May a boycott of the Nevrokop Garrison Commander was proposed—"or other measures". And so on.

Meanwhile the internal political situation went from bad to worse. Over the entrance to the Sobranié hung the gilt motto: "Unity makes strength"; within, the representatives of thirteen political parties and numerous factions (proportionately more than double the number of deputies sufficing to govern neighbouring countries) contended for personal power while economic chaos paralysed the peasants, driving them towards "revolt, fratricidal struggles, anarchy and the unknown".

In the autumn of 1933 the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce had condemned "the increasing bribery and corruption among State functionaries"; during the spring newspapers of all shades were full of the most outrageous examples of it (one cause for it being that salaries and pensions were months in arrear). Of Civil Servants there was an immense army who did the least possible work, so official business was a penance which might be curtailed only by bribery. It took fifty minutes to cash a cheque at the National Bank. Politicians often sold official posts. Jobs were invented and official forms duplicated till the wheels of State were enmeshed in red tape; for each Ministry became a party fief in which the Minister employed as many black-coat partisans as he could. These governing buccaneers strove to hold their power by mass arrests and trials



(Left) Monument to the "Unknown Comitadji" at Gorna Djoumaia; behind is the military club.
(Right) Bulgarian Nazi Storm Troopers.



of "Communists"; nor dared any newspaper mention Georghi Dimitrov's part at the Reichstag Trial. The Zveno Group urged non-party Government, Tsankov organised Storm Troops, whereupon Tsar Boris appealed for unity and less talk. In December, Bills to limit loquacity (a Bulgarian failing) in the Sobranié and forbid the dismissal of Finance Ministry officials (only) for political reasons were passed.

But the Cabinet was hopelessly divided. The Agrarians clamoured for a fourth Ministry; but their justifiable claim was discredited by Dimov's relations with Mihailov and his notorious corruption—he had turned his Ministry into a "Ministry of Public Corruption" and grown rich so rapidly that in November 1933 Nikola Zahariev declined to associate with him further, putting himself at the head of a dozen dissident Agrarian deputies beside Omarchevski.

In May came the climax. The Agrarian Ministers resolved to overthrow the Government unless they had their way. They chose to victimise the Radical Kostourkov, Minister of Railways, counting upon Right Opposition support. On May 4 they most unjustly charged him with dismissing 4,694 railway employees to make way for his own partisans, whereas he had checked corruption in his Ministry and was widely respected for exceptional honesty. Amid wild excitement an engineered vote went against him and he resigned. As he left the Sobranié it was said on all hands that this outrage marked the end of parliamentary government; in a corridor a reporter tried to sell me somebody's plans for a *coup d'état*! "Our Government is not a democracy but purely and simply an organisation of marauding bands", wrote *Mir* on May 12.

But Mouchanov declined to give the Agrarians Kostourkov's Ministry: the Minister of Education was charged with irregularities: the War Minister was called upon to explain why he had dismissed five generals some months earlier, in consultation with the Tsar's A.D.C. but without consulting the Army Council. Then on May 9 General Kissiov resigned. It seems that Kissiov and Bakardjiev planned to arrest the Officers' League leaders, but the Tsar felt more subtle handling was required; he appointed General Vatev, now President of the League, in Kissiov's stead. Generals Bakardjiev, Zdravko Georghiev, Bossilkov and Solarov (Volkovists) threatened to resign—then curiously changed their minds.

On May 14 Mouchanov handed his depleted Cabinet's resignation to the Tsar who, after consulting the party leaders, asked him to form a fresh Cabinet. For three days Mouchanov tried, then admitted failure.

The air was now charged with suspense. I was strongly tempted to forecast a *coup d'état*. There were the Volkovist Army Chiefs and Mihailovist terrorists disposing of the Macedonian militia. The Tsankovists were organising a monster congress in Sofia on May 20; they planned, it was believed, to seize power. The Agrarians began counter-preparations. On May 18 a delegation of reserve officers urged the Tsar to form a non-party Government. The Tsar hesitated.

So the Officers' League Council resolved to act. The Zveno Group agreed. The Government had collapsed. Bulgaria was in danger of civil war. Any solution the Tsar evolved would be in the interests of Italophiles and Germanophiles. Old methods would continue. But the country needed new methods. The flower of the Army belonged to the League—those who did not were Volkovists. The League was governed by a Council of Twelve; of these, the President (Vatev), vice-President (General Zlatev) and three civilian political members (Veltchev, Kimon Georgiev and Karakoulakov) composed the Executive Committee. They had their programme, most of it drawn up by the political members during arduous evenings at Petar Todorov's flat. Operation orders, signed by General Vatev, were already in the hands of Leaguers throughout the country; they awaited the prearranged code signal to act.

But Vatev had become a "Tsar's man" overnight. War Minister now, he declined at the last to act without the Tsar's order. Though superseding Bakardjiev and Solarov, he nominated the Volkovist General Yovev C.G.S., and General Bossilkov to supersede Zlatev who temporarily commanded Sofia garrison. On the morrow they would take their posts and, it was said, intern the League's leaders until the Tsar had formed whatever Government he pleased. So Veltchev and his colleagues resolved to act without Vatev. Zlatev took command. "Our lives are in your hands," Veltchev told him.

The chance arrival of Stephen Heald from Chatham House kept me at the Hotel Bulgarie until two o'clock the morning of May 19. Going home I noticed that sentries

before the War Office were trebled. Officers strolled in groups. A strong force of mounted police guarded the G.P.O.; police were peering into the letter-boxes. Hurrying to my rooms I rang up *The Times* Correspondent; but Doctor Damianov did not think my suspicions were good reasons for leaving his bed. I went again into Sofia's eerie night of empty streets. Far down a boulevard my eye caught a moving shadow at a distant crossing. I listened. The steady tramp of troops—marching into town. Hurrying on, I met *Le Temps* Correspondent. "What news?" I asked. "Nothing—perhaps Mouchanov will form a Government to-morrow after all." I called out an unconvinced Damianov. As we approached the Central Police Station, near the Palace and War Office, we found troops in the side streets. So we knew. Officers bustled about the Police Station (the League's headquarters to-night). We were ordered within, sharply interrogated, then told: "Go home, or you may not get. This is another search for arms, like last June." People had said of that search that it was a rehearsal, I reflected.

We went to rouse the British Legation archivist, thinking a British official's company might be our pass to circulate. He lived in a block of flats next to Girghinov's house—guarded now by soldiers. An officer eyed us suspiciously. He assumed we were going home. But the archivist could not be roused. We emerged. The officer made a sign. Two burly infantrymen sprang behind us with levelled bayonets. We were arrested. There was no argument—we were marched back to the League's headquarters. Artillery and machine-guns had arrived and there were military patrols in the streets now.

Our ignominious return caused irritation. However, a jovial Colonel saw the joke. But really we must go home—where did we live? I declined to say, insisting that we should go to the British Legation, for I thought it would be easier to get out of than my rooms. So we were sent, under police escort. Officers with grenades at belts questioned us but let us pass. It was now four a.m. I banged at a window. A sleepy porter looked out. "I want to see the Minister," I said. "But he's in bed." "So I suppose," I answered, "but I must see him." I scribbled "*coup d'état*" upon a card. Soon we were admitted and Charles Beckwith came down, bringing welcome whisky and soda. He enquired anxiously for the Tsar's safety. None of us

knew whose coup this was. At the Legation I was marooned until midday, when the all-clear sounded.

At one a.m. troops had surrounded Sofia, then marched in to occupy public buildings. Telephones were cut off, Ministers politely guarded in their homes. Nobody might walk the streets. But not a shot was fired, not a drop of blood shed. "It was," said the Mayor of Paris who was visiting Sofia, "the most elegant *coup d'état*." Volkovist senior officers were arrested in their quarters. The Commander of the Royal Guard tried to resist but was overpowered. General Vatev was suddenly seized by officers who burst into his room as he was trying to ring up the cavalry barracks. The telephone fell. Vatev cried:

"Shoot me but don't dishonour me."

"You have your revolver," was the cool retort. General Zlatev took his place. Provincial garrisons had acted upon Vatev's advance orders; they received next day the message: "for Vatev read Zlatev."

The evening before, Mouchanov had asked Mouraviev if he thought a coup possible. "Anything is possible," had been the answer. Mouraviev had barely reached home when rifle-butts rattled before his door; for him history had indeed repeated itself! Early in the morning Mouchanov, looking from his window and seeing troops, had tried to ring up the War Minister. He was told no private individuals might telephone.

"But I am the Prime Minister," he protested.

"You are the Prime Minister no longer," was the curt reply.

The League Council had urged Veltchev to head a military cabinet of themselves, arguing that thus the League would be sure the evils of 1923 would not be repeated; but Veltchev had replied that it was not the Army's job to govern and if it tried it would make a mess. Soldiers did not rise by political ability; but Generals would decline to obey Captains and Colonels who became Ministers or Under-Secretaries and the result would be confusion. Ever since the coup in 1923, which Veltchev had lived (as he often said) to regret, the War Office had secretly governed; Veltchev's main aim was to end that state of affairs. An example must be set. The Army was the only national force that could hold antagonistic factions apart and set up a national Government; but that done, it must retire to barracks under its hierarchy and let patriotic experts rule. The War Minister

should represent the Army in the Cabinet. But Veltchev declined the War Office in case it should seem as if he had conspired for personal advantage; nor would he take any post from which his ruling barred his military colleagues, for though not a serving officer he felt he belonged to the League. And he wished to set an example of readiness to serve without recognition or reward. He shunned publicity too, never spoke publicly, never gave interviews to journalists. My first meeting with him was strictly private: but somehow we struck up a warm friendship. He quoted to me from the pages of the world's history once to prove that unselfish example is a secret of leadership.

Finally the League Council authorised Veltchev to choose a Prime Minister. He chose Kimon Georghiev, who had two hundred non-party idealists of the Zveno Group behind him. But a representative Agrarian was wanted in the Cabinet. Stamboliski's former Ministers were too blackened by propaganda. In the evening of the 18th Georghiev took Gitchev for a drive and asked him to cut adrift from Dimov and his uneasy Mihailovist association; but Gitchev hesitated to take the plunge. He sat up all night, hiding his light. Asked again in the small hours he still hesitated; whereupon Zahariev was invited and accepted.

Georghiev's Ministers were true Bulgarians from their country's heart, men of proved integrity, highly qualified by training or experience for the Ministries entrusted to them. Georghiev himself controlled the Ministry of Justice. The retired General Petar Midilev (vice-President of the Reserve Officers' Association) took the Ministry of Interior: Zlatev, War: Petar Todorov, Finance: Yanaki Mollov, Education: Kosta Boyadjiev, National Economy: Zahariev, Communications. The Francophile Democrat Minister in Paris, Konstantin Batolov, became Foreign Minister—a sign that Italy was spurned; but no changes in the Diplomatic Service were made beyond the dismissal of one or two notorious pro-Mihailovists. Ministries were reduced to eight (though officers took charge of Railways and Telegraphs). Karakoulakov became Secretary-General to the Cabinet; Veltchev, as Adviser to the Prime Minister, became the strong silent man behind the scene.

At five in the morning Georghiev and Zlatev went to the Palace. They were admitted by the Tsar's A.D.C., General Panov. The Tsar dressed in military uniform to receive them. Neither has divulged what passed: but Panov is *said*

to have overheard the Tsar protesting against the Army's interference, saying the Constitution had been annulled, threatening to abdicate: to which Georghiev answered:

"Bulgaria can exist without a Tsar, but not without a stable Government."

Two hours later Mouchanov surrendered the mandate to form a Cabinet and advised the Tsar to accept the change; whereupon the Tsar signed the *ukase* appointing the new Government, which immediately broadcast its programme.

The party system, it declared, had failed to avert a grave moral and political crisis; so the Army, to end anarchy, had established a National Union Government to reorganise the State under permanent officials who would be appointed or dismissed upon their merits alone. The Government would end financial chaos, taking special care of agriculture and the villages: lower the exorbitant prices of industrial products: protect labour by drastic social legislation: reorganise education to meet the country's real needs: provide quicker and cheaper justice: re-establish the State's authority throughout the whole country: cultivate good relations with all countries and re-establish relations with Russia.

When at midday the troops marched back to barracks they were loudly cheered. There was widespread relief at the change, sudden efficiency and animation in Government departments. For the first evening there was curfew: for several nights public buildings were guarded (a sentry almost bayoneted me for approaching the Telegraph Office): but there were no other evidences of the coup. Everything passed quietly in the provinces too, though disreputable foreign newspapers invented sensations. Stamboliski's former Ministers (called Pladné Agrarians from the name of their newspaper) were content. The poverty-stricken peasants, they told me, had been disillusioned by empty promises and hoped the new Government fulfilled its programme (which was largely Stamboliski's); they were relieved Tsankov had been forestalled and agreed that a temporary suspension of parliamentary government had become expedient. The provincial Press supported the new Government enthusiastically—in marked contrast to the frigid attitude of chauvinist papers in Sofia. Even Mouchanov admitted that party government had become impossible. Tsankov told me the change was "perhaps the biggest event in the history of modern Bulgaria"; but when he found the new Government ignored him, though adopting much of his programme, he

turned violently against it and conspired with the Volkovists.

General Volkov was immediately dismissed from the Legation in Rome and banished from Bulgaria. Generals Bakardjiev, Zdravko Georghiev, Kissiov, Colonel Porkov, Lieutenant Kornetchki and other notorious Volkovists (perhaps thirty-seven all told) were pensioned. The "Spy Affair" was finally liquidated on September 2, when an Army Order proclaimed that no single spy or traitor had ever been found among Bulgarian officers: Marinopolski and Alexiev were unsullied; then a funeral service with full military honours was held at Marinopolski's grave. Some hothead threw bombs into Generals Bakardjiev's and Marinkov's empty houses to mark this occasion!

General Vatev had been liberated but talked so loudly and indignantly that he was ordered to a provincial town; but he tried to sneak back to Sofia, whereupon he was banished to Vienna.

The Sobranié was closed. Georghiev declared he would create a "strong, authoritative and competent executive power which would build a new Bulgaria", preparing for a Sobranié in which one-third of the deputies would be freely elected political representatives; they would arbitrate in national questions among the remainder, who would represent economic and professional unions. Dead was the old form of parliamentary government "with its degrading scenes and clan spirit".

Then the Zveno Group dissolved itself—an example the political parties failed to follow: whereupon they were dissolved by decree, their papers suspended, their properties liquidated. Fascist organisations were dissolved too—the Government would have no "shirts". But eleven daily newspapers remained in Sofia alone, representing all shades of opinion. Even *Makedonia* continued. An official censorship was imposed—under the Mihailovists' charming enemy Koulichev; but it allowed infinitely greater freedom than the terrorists' occult censorship of the past. Only inflammatory political propaganda was barred.

Revolutionary organisations were ordered to disband. The Protogerovists immediately suspended *Revolutionary Sheet* and became ordinary citizens. But the Mihailovist leaders hid with friends; they ordered agents to collect dues by threat: conceal arms: work through the National Committee and its affiliations which, being theoretically non-political, were not dissolved with the political parties.

Georghiev, Veltchev and their colleagues were condemned to death: outrages planned; whereupon the Government suspended the formality of royal assent to death warrants and executed a terrorist who had murdered an immigrant ten days before the coup. This single example sufficed to prevent attacks upon the new rulers!

Upon the night of the coup troops had occupied strategic points in Petritch Department and controlled traffic. One of the Government's first measures was to merge Bulgaria's sixteen Prefectures in seven Provinces; Petritch Department was split between the Sofia and Plovdiv Provinces and new officials sent to take control. The people joyously welcomed them by ringing their church bells, but clamoured for schools, irrigation, and a fair distribution of land. Courts martial sat immediately to investigate terrorists' crimes and were inundated with complaints. In November Georghiev toured the Department—the first Prime Minister to visit it.

Early in June troops began to hunt the Department for arms, archives and terrorists. Since the War Office and High Command had been purged of Volkovists the "all-powerful" Organisation crumbled away. Only six men resisted! Challenged by a patrol near Razlog on June 14, they opened fire; but the troops were astonished to see one of the band deliberately shoot a man with them—who turned out to be Kavrakirov, their captive! Three were killed, two caught. Freed from terrorist control, the militia and the people eagerly helped the military who, within a month, collected over 11,000 rifles, 8,000 grenades, 50 machine-guns and other war materials. Discoveries continued and in November quantities of explosives were seized at Kustendil. About 300 terrorists were interned.

In August all members of the National Committee and several Mihailovist deputies (who had violated their written pledge to abstain from propaganda) were interned; the police stated that compromising documents "proved once again that the National Committee, as at present constituted, is and continues to be a body controlled by the dissolved illegal Organisation". But the immigrants were free to elect a fresh committee and a congress in Sofia under Grigor Anastassov immediately did so. The new President, the veteran revolutionary Dimiter Mirtchev, urged understanding between "the two brother-nations", calling for South Slav Federation in which the Macedonians should enjoy cultural and political rights. The new Committee's pre-

decessors left neither funds nor account books behind them!

The Government decreed that anyone holding Mihailovist property (valued at 400,000,000 *leva*) but not declaring it would be fined and imprisoned. All such property was confiscated: money, opium and other goods being seized from well-known Sofiots who had invested in their businesses capital extorted by the terrorists. The provincial Press eagerly published such revelations about the terrorists as the authorities thought it discreet to make, but the chauvinist Press in Sofia pointedly ignored them.

Though Kustendil and Stanimaka were blockaded and part of Sofia searched, Mihailov and his lieutenants could not be found; so heavy fines and imprisonment were decreed for all who helped or hid terrorist leaders. Then on September 7 the police published descriptions and portraits of terrorists required to answer various charges, among them Mihailov, Nastev, Kourtev, Drangov, and Tchernozemski; if they did not surrender within ten days they would be presumed guilty and might be taken dead or alive by anybody. So for the first time Mihailov's photograph was published for all his enemies to see. Bulgaria was no longer safe for him. But surely he could fly to South Serbia? Had it not always been pretended that he and his "Internal" Organisation dwelt there, beloved by the entire population? During the night of September 16 he and Mentcha, helped by Volkov's former A.D.C., Captain Tochev, slipped across the frontier—into Turkey! Tochev was condemned to ten years' hard labour.

In Turkey Mihailov declared he would "continue to work for the unity and independence of Macedonia"! He was condemned to death *in contumaciam* by courts martial half a dozen times over, once with Kourtev and Nastev for murdering a peasant who had dared read a Protogerovist paper and pass it to friends; but Turkey shelters this "political fugitive" and perhaps thinks to use him one day. In a year perhaps twenty-five Mihailovists were condemned to death; but though most of them were under arrest they were never executed. Drangov and Nastev tried to follow Mihailov; disguised as shepherds, they were arrested on October 25 near the Turkish border: then identified. Two other terrorist leaders gave themselves up at Rustchuk; three were caught in Sofia while leaving a house the police had searched without finding their cunningly-constructed secret

hiding places. Tchernozemski had gone to Hungary in 1932.

Unprejudiced observers soon agreed that Georghiev's Government was the best Bulgaria had ever known. It was National, Radical in purpose (corresponding with moderate British Conservatism), acknowledging no foreign political doctrine but ready to borrow ideas, truly democratic in inspiration. The country was well governed at last. Georghiev and Veltchev set a tone of almost Cromwellian austerity. Georghiev, whom I met first on May 20, impressed by his modesty and sincerity: but Zlatev seemed a simple (though genial) soldier—he fussed in while I talked with Georghiev, who introduced me. The new Ministers reduced their own salaries by 50% (to £30 a month), then lost no moment in talk but set to cleanse the administrative Augean Stables with a zeal which soon showed results. From a squalid place of terror Sofia became a city of spotless streets, well-kept gardens and green lawns in the waste spaces: its poor relieved: children cared for: sanitation improved: cheap medical aid provided for the sick. But police efforts to stop jay-walking were often humorous.

The reconciliation of urban exploiters and rural exploited was the Government's first aim. The Minister of Interior proclaimed that the police must no longer inspire terror but become "friends of the people"; indeed the new rulers' gentleness was their undoing, for beyond temporarily banishing to provincial towns a dozen prominent opponents who persistently intrigued (Zdravko Georghiev, Porkov, Danial Kraptchev, Boyan Smilov: and Gitchev—who was jealous of Zahariev) they took no repressive steps, believing their honesty of purpose would be their strength. But philanthropists are seldom appreciated.

Much might be written upon the Georghiev Government's admirable reforms. They held that all Bulgarians should be equal before the law: "the workman is not a slave but a national hero . . . no Bulgarian should be hungry, thirsty or without a roof". Seven non-political unions were organised—of workmen, agricultural labourers, peasant proprietors, artisans, tradesmen, merchants and industrialists—which, replacing partisan associations, should execute social reforms, elect representatives to local government bodies, ultimately provide deputies for the new Sobranié. Within these seven unions professional corporations were formed: workmen, merchants and so forth being grouped

according to professional interests and forming branches in every town or commune. The unions were governed by elected representatives approved by the Directory of Social Renovation, an institution charged with a vast national propaganda scheme.

The Directory of Social Renovation's purpose was to propagate higher standards of social morality, enlightened patriotism and culture: heal the schisms which forty-four political parties or factions had caused in every town and village: cure the moral paralysis bred of terror and corruption, with which few were untainted. The Directory organised innumerable public lectures, welded all youth organisations into one great union for physical and moral education, stimulated social welfare work. But as known crimes had increased since 1910 by 64% for the whole population and by 435% among State officials, it is hardly surprising that the task proved too great for the Directory, which was dissolved in 1935. Its first (honorary) Director-General, Petko Pentchev, was suspect because, while an intimate of Sandanski's, he had urged South Slav Federation for which most Bulgarian officers, though against terrorist methods, were by no means prepared; Pentchev, though a Bulgarian, had once edited *Freedom or Death*, and led a band to the Vardar in 1921. So he was superseded by the ambitious Colonel Kroum Kolev: and he in turn by Colonel PopZlatev, a passionate though unpractical idealist. But this was not a soldier's job.

Among numerous administrative reforms the communes were enlarged in area and reduced in numbers from 2,552 to 800; they retained elected councils; but in place of elected head-men (*kmet*), barely literate partisans sunk in village ignorance, the Government appointed lawyers or other educated men qualified to stimulate social developments, supervise the schools, judge minor disputes hitherto dealt with by Petty Sessional Courts (at much cost to the peasants in time and money). This reform provided occupation for the surfeit of lawyers who plagued this hitherto lawless land: speeded up justice by relieving the congestion of minor cases (prisoners had often lain for months in gaol before trial): reduced the number of courts and judges. Energetic steps were taken to improve public health, it being decreed that young doctors and veterinary surgeons (before choosing practices for themselves) must serve for three years wherever the State required; hitherto Sofia had been sur-

feited with doctors while peasants tramped miles for attention. Priests' salaries were raised to draw better men into the Church. Scholarships were provided for gifted but indigent children; but, to reduce the surfeit of "intellectuals", university students were limited: and sixty-one High Schools were closed, being replaced by thirty-three Practical Schools teaching agriculture and kindred occupations. All these measures were part of a "back to the land" movement: Five Year Plans for agriculture, re-forestation, selective breeding and electrification being inaugurated and every effort made to improve village life.

The task facing my jovial friend Petar Todorov would have appalled a less stout-hearted man. During 1930 alone taxes amounting to 2,800,000,000 *leva* had remained uncollected, while during seven months of 1933 local officials had embezzled 500,000,000! In April 1933 the League of Nations had threatened Bulgaria with financial control when she appealed for relief from repayment of her loans. Within three months Todorov made a gross economy of 550,000,000 *leva* upon a budget of 5,649,000,000, partly because over 6,000 unnecessary and corrupt Civil Servants were dismissed (though only twenty-four officials were paid more than 10,000 a month). An internal loan, thrice oversubscribed, paid arrears of internal debts, salaries and pensions. Private debts crushing peasants and small tradesmen were drastically reduced (instead of inflating the *lev*) to correspond with a 65% drop in the value of agricultural products (a matter Mouchanov's Government had dealt with very inadequately); numerous provincial banks were compulsorily fused in one Bulgarian Credit Bank providing cheaper credit. Next, Todorov began to establish State monopolies, each designed not merely to increase revenues but to redress flagrant abuses. For example, the sale of school books was monopolised to stop changes of text books for publishers' benefit. The tobacco monopoly, which delighted the growers (who at last received fair prices) ended trickery whereby private buyers had deprived the State of 500,000,000 *leva* annually. A salt monopoly stimulated home production. An alcohol monopoly was intended to check private distilling and consequent alcoholism; peasants often gave their children spirits for breakfast because milk fetched better prices! A monopoly of the distribution of light mineral oils, which came chiefly from Roumania, was designed to reduce and equalise prices while preparing the

market for a National Mixture manufactured from Bulgarian crude oils blended with alcohol from surplus agricultural products.

Diplomatic relations with Russia were renewed, this angering the Germanophile Tsankovists and White Russians. Bulgaria and Russia pledged themselves to refrain from interfering in each others' internal affairs! The Russian Minister Razkolnikov, who was enthusiastically welcomed when he arrived in November, told me affably how he had been caught by a British warship in 1918 and learnt his English in Brixton gaol!

The suppression of the terrorist Organisation made possible an official visit by King Alexander and the Queen of Yugoslavia to Sofia at the end of September. There was real enthusiasm among both moderate Bulgarians and Macedonian immigrants — who knew the King was winning approval among the South Serbian people and recalled his rush to Valandovo after the earthquake in 1931. It was bold of King Alexander to visit this city of assassins; but the temporary expulsion from Sofia of several thousand extremist suspects, and elaborate precautions, prevented any untoward incident. The blow fell a fortnight later. Landing at Marseilles in October 9 upon a state visit to France, King Alexander was assassinated by Tchernozemski, former agent of the Bulgarian War Office; he died for his growing popularity among the Balkan Slavs. Alone among Yugoslavs, King Alexander (in every sense a national King) had the strength to out-manceuvre the Serbian chauvinists; there are indications that he worked first to unify Yugoslavia, then decentralise under a federal system—but his death postponed indefinitely any such plan.

The crime had been long premeditated. Perhaps Italy and Hungary did not at that moment desire it but they had built and harboured the organisations whence the assassins sprang. Unquestionably, French precautions at Marseilles had been most inadequate; but a suggestion that the Yugoslav Government itself inspired the crime is an absurd intrigue. Since 1922 Supremists had often discussed a plan to murder the King but prudence had prevailed for fear of grave consequences; yet *Freedom or Death* had foretold his death two years earlier. In December 1933 Pavelitch had sent assassins to kill him in Zagreb but they were caught before they could accomplish their mission; then Pavelitch had written openly that he must die, even faking a resolu-

tion to that effect from Croat immigrants in Belgium. Pavelitch's agent in America publicly prophesied King Alexander's death two days before the crime.

The previous suppression of Mihailov's Organisation saved Bulgaria from invasion or even blame; but Yugoslavia was wildly indignant at the Hungarian and Italian authorities' ill-concealed collaboration with the terrorists and war was prevented only by tactful manipulation at Geneva. Italians and Hungarians had always hoped the death of Yugoslavia's strong man and unifier would be followed by the disruption of his kingdom, the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which he had re-named "Yugoslavia" in 1929; but they were sadly disillusioned by the solidarity of the whole Yugoslav nation in this moment of national bereavement. Terrorists from Italy and Hungary were ready to cross the frontier to exploit disturbances which, it was supposed, would follow the crime—curiously, the Hungarian Minister in Sofia was the first diplomat there to hear news of it and express formal condolences at the Yugoslav Legation; but there were no disturbances: only grief, indignation, and demonstrations throughout Croatia against Italy! In the circumstances Italy was discreetly conciliatory; moreover she wanted no war in Europe—she was secretly planning her Abyssinian venture and sought a previous reconciliation with France, Yugoslavia's ally. So Italy let Hungary become the scapegoat; on the other hand, France restrained her protégé, so a murky fog of discretion veiled Italian responsibilities and all major evidence of the Hungarian authorities' guilt.

Tchernoziemski was one of five men sent to France from Hungary by Pavelitch. Three had qualified by bombing exploits, while their leader (Kvaternik) knew France intimately. Three of Tchernoziemski's accomplices were caught, tried at Aix-en-Provence, and condemned to life-long imprisonment; but Kvaternik, Pavelitch, Pertchevitch and Pertchetz, sheltered by their patrons, are at liberty—Rome and Budapest know where; though the French condemned them to death *in contumaciam*, their extradition was refused. Mihailov lives happily in Turkey. Drangov and Tchernoziemski's other friends are now free in Bulgaria. A memorial service at Sofia for Tchernoziemski, six months after his death, was attended by 500 admirers.

This crime was allowed to cast no shadow across the path of Bulgaro-Yugoslav friendship. Nevertheless Yugo-

slavia's attitude was cautious; she did not wish to alarm neighbouring States: and she doubted Georghiev's power to overcome his Supremist opponents—so still only semi-official Bulgarian papers might be carried across the border (as I found from experience in September). However, a second point of passage across the Black Frontier had been opened in September; troops upon either side now hailed each other warmly in their common tongue. But such fraternity was too much for Italy; her Legation in Sofia had already started to stir trouble. Nor were the Roumanian, Greek and Turkish Representatives entirely innocent perhaps; their Governments withheld friendly encouragement from Georghiev's Government while losing no opportunity to flatter Tsar Boris.

Though working for *entente* with Yugoslavia, Georghiev's Government never considered Federation. Neither country's ruling class was prepared for it. But cordiality brought it nearer; this the Yugoslav *Pravda* emphasised, writing that the Yugoslav spirit, for so long suppressed, was now "raising to first place Yugoslav nationality in opposition to Bulgarian nationalism". If Agrarians ruled in both countries Federation would become well-nigh inevitable—the Bulgarian masses, impoverished for the chauvinism of a clique, would welcome it; but that clique will never willingly let them rule, nor allow the idea to be propagated.

Supremists, terrorists, army chiefs of the old school, disappointed deputies and partisans and corrupt officials had made common cause against a Government guided by the Zveno Group, a group detested for its reasonableness and suspected of Federalism. Moreover, though most army and reserve officers disliked partisan and terrorist rule, they were not unanimously agreed upon the Zveno Group's programme nor prepared to abandon the Great Bulgaria dream; this weak point in the Government's line its enemies worked to breach. Already in June a violent propaganda had begun, its tune being that many officers, loyal to their oath of allegiance, were indignant that the coup should have been made without the Tsar's consent and would overthrow the Cabinet, which planned a republic. The same republican scare had discomfited Stamboliski! This propaganda was re-echoed, if not actually directed, by the Italian Legation. That Tsar Boris had enemies among the Government's Macedonian immigrant supporters is true, for they felt he had encouraged the Mihailovists; but Shandanov

assured me the Tsar's position was menaced by nobody. Certainly neither Veltchev nor any of the Government were republicans—if they had been, May 19 was their opportunity to proclaim a republic, when the whole Army was with them; but they wanted a truly constitutional monarchy and an administration which would get things done.

Veltchev, the driving force behind the Government, the most powerful personality in the country, was singled out for attack. He was winning Agrarian and Democrat support. He had exposed the so-called IMRO. But Veltchev sought understanding with Tsar Boris. One day in June they were closeted together for four hours. The Tsar opened by excusing himself for Veltchev's dismissal in 1928; Veltchev retorted that facts were against the Tsar's arguments: adding that bygones should be bygones and the future alone mattered. Thereafter their conversation was cordial enough, for the Tsar concluded it by embracing Veltchev, saying they would work together for Bulgaria's welfare; whereupon Veltchev told his friends the Tsar was with them. On July 12 Georghiev publicly declared that since the coup "all the Government's acts have had the full approval and support of the Crown. This happy collaboration . . . silences the malicious rumours which have circulated."

But Veltchev's opponents were determined to raise the royal standard against the Government—it was their only possible pretext for reaction. Articles subtly implied that the Tsar was a prisoner—though he signed the Ministers' innumerable decrees, appeared frequently and freely at public functions, his Court officials were unchanged, there was no anti-monarchist propaganda whatsoever. To stifle this dangerously misleading propaganda the censorship restricted publication of articles upon and photographs of the Tsar, with which Supremist papers wished to plaster their pages provocatively—restrictions immediately represented as preliminaries to the proclamation of a republic. There was a lull when in August the Tsar unveiled a memorial upon Shipka Pass before 80,000 troops, officials and Ministers, amid great cordiality; but soon frenzied propaganda was redoubled, infecting many who had hitherto supported the Government. A gradual evolution to a military Dictatorship under the Tsar was foretold.

Early in September I met Veltchev—at the Cabinet's headquarters. I was pledged to secrecy—he wanted no interviewers. I had expected to be ushered ceremoniously into

the presence of a loud Dictator: but he came to me quietly in the waiting-room and sat with me in a corner. He was, he told me, a firm believer in the monarchy, symbol of national unity; the nation would never agree upon a president. Nor did he think South Slav Federation had become practical politics; but South Slav *entente* would close the Balkans to Great Powers' intrigues. There must be an end of revisionist clamour, concentration upon internal reconstruction. "Everyone must be in his place—Tsar, Ministers, Army and People." The Tsar had marched with the Supremists; like his father he had directed the country's affairs though he bore no responsibility. That must cease. Responsible Ministers must govern while the Tsar reigned constitutionally—"like your King"; he must be above party politics, the representative of national dignity, his prestige invulnerable. The Constitution must be revised accordingly.

Among the officers there were different shades of opinion, continued Veltchev; but the Army's place was the barracks. The people, morally regenerated, must be represented by honest and qualified deputies. Of the Communists he had no fear—reforms would cut the ground from under their few feet; but there was real danger from reactionaries who, if they recovered power, would provoke the Left to desperation. When I suggested that terrorists and their supporters should be hanged, Veltchev was horrified.

"No good can come of bloodshed! Besides, they could not be executed without fair trial, which would involve too many people. No; it is best to turn the page quietly and forget the unhappy past."

Veltchev's reticence was his mistake. Shunning the limelight, he never made his aims plain; he and his colleagues, intent upon good works, scorned political propaganda (which, moreover, they had forbidden). Though sometimes criticising Tsar Boris in private, Veltchev always added that the Tsar should be above such criticism—"one day I may have to defend the Monarchy," he told me once. The Tsar's position was, from the start, a delicate matter however; the intention was to deprive him of those prerogatives, inherited from his father, whereby he might hold rascally War Ministers in power and conclude secret treaties. Excessive protestations of pacific intentions and too emphatic denials of foreign commitments had merely heightened the suspicion that he had pledged Bulgaria to Hitler and Musso-

lini. And was it not time to end a mediæval system masked by sham democracy?

That the Government's opponents rallied to the Tsar indicated their conviction that he was with them; nor did he discourage them. Intolerant as his father of criticism, Tsar Boris clearly resolved to be rid of Veltchev who threatened his prerogatives and had none of that obsequious servility characteristic of most Bulgarian politicians; so he tacitly abetted the conspiracy against the Government—not disdaining the bribery of presents and flattery perhaps. I was told upon good authority in Belgrade that when King Alexander was in Sofia, Tsar Boris at his side pointed to Veltchev during a reception, then whispered: "Here comes our Apis"—referring to the celebrated Serbian Colonel Dimitrievitch, who was framed up and executed with others of the Black Hand Military League at Salonika in 1917. Next day Tsar Boris suddenly asked King Alexander:

"How did you get rid of your Apis?" King Alexander answered that not he but a responsible Government had suppressed Apis and his friends. King Alexander afterwards told his Ministers:

"Tsar Boris asked me for a formula whereby he could be rid of Veltchev. Veltchev had better beware."

In 1936 a very responsible English journalist, fresh from visiting Tsar Boris, exclaimed to me impatiently:

"What did the Georghiev Government do? Nothing—except suppress the Revolutionary Organisation: and I am not at all sure that was a good thing." There are excellent reasons for assuming that he expressed the Tsar's views.

Certain officers of the League, ambitious men who believed they could better the politicians, now called again for the military Government Veltchev had vetoed. The Army's elimination from politics had been the Government's aim throughout, but became doubly expedient now many honest but naïve officers were being misled by reactionary propaganda. In October Zlatev, confessing he could not cope with the problem, proposed that Veltchev should take the War Office. Veltchev reluctantly agreed. But next day Zlatev changed his mind, saying he would yield the War Office to nobody. This was the first rift in the Cabinet. Veltchev's influence was waning—it had waned so far in December that six young soldiers, condemned by courts martial for their part in one of the numerous "Communist conspiracies" (perhaps engineered by reactionaries), were

executed as an example, though such executions were entirely contrary to Veltchev's policy of bloodless conciliation; then in January the notorious Captain Kutzarov assaulted two Protogerovists who were sitting peacefully in a café, whereupon the Protogerovists were interned, without enquiry, upon Kutzarov's evidence that they had insulted "a Bulgarian officer".

The Government's radical reforms drove bankers, merchants, industrialists, and those who could no longer evade taxes into its opponents' ranks; its sanitary regulations, measures against alcoholism and similar reforms irritated the peasants. The new Bulgarian Credit Bank threatened foreign banks in Sofia with competition; moreover the protection of peasant producers from urban exploitation, limitation of working hours, warning to parasite industries that they must reduce prices (for behind towering tariff barriers erected by Liaptchev's Government, they had realised profits up to 150%), Todorov's heavy hand against his old antagonists (of 1924) the profiteering sugar manufacturers, and finally the decision (in November) to impose an oil monopoly, raised a clamour which was encouraged by foreign consulates because vast amounts of foreign capital were invested in Bulgarian industry. There was flagrant wire-pulling to ensure that at Geneva, in January, Todorov should be reproached by the League of Nations Financial Committee; it declared that "the new programme is believed to be a grave danger to Bulgaria's financial structure"—although that programme caused a phenomenal increase of exports in 1935. The direct benefit of Todorov's reforms to foreign loan bond-holders (with whom he reached a most successful agreement in London during December) was ignored.

While these forces were mustering against it the Government, its administrative reforms completed, faced the problem of amending and reviving a Constitution moribund for years. A Codification Commission under Georghiev (as Minister of Justice) began to prepare amendments; its terms of reference were indicated in a semi-official Review which wrote on January 1 that the new Constitution "will fix and define the functions of the three public powers as well as the position of the Tsar": adding that the new system of Government "must be above classes and parties".

Meanwhile the League Council asked Zlatev and Veltchev to draw up with Georghiev a decree-law which should regularise the Government until the Commission completed

its laborious task. This decree-law provided that: "The Prime Minister is chief of the Government. He exercises executive power through the Ministers and is responsible to the Tsar for the whole conduct of government. . . . He presents to the Tsar for ratification all acts approved by him, by the Ministers under him, and by the Sobranié." So individual Ministers (not excepting the War Minister) would be responsible to the Tsar only *through* the Prime Minister: not, as hitherto, directly and individually. Moreover the Prime Minister would form his own Cabinet freely; nor would individual Ministers hold consultations with the Tsar behind his back. Thus the Tsar would conclude foreign alliances and appoint or dismiss officers only *through* the Prime Minister, who would bear responsibility before the nation. This arrangement appealed neither to Tsar Boris nor the Supremists.

While this decree-law was being prepared various suggestions were bandied about (by the amateur politicians with which Sofia abounds), chief among them that a High Council of State (exercising certain prerogatives hitherto the Tsar's) would be formed under Veltchev's presidency. Colour was lent to this rumour by the publication on December 16 (for the first time) of Veltchev's portrait between Georghiev's and Zlatev's, in the semi-official *Novi Dni*, beneath the headline: "The leaders of new Bulgaria among the people"—the trio being upon a provincial tour. Actually this publication had been arranged by enthusiastic Veltchevists, who argued that if Veltchev became Prime Minister he might push the Army back to barracks. On New Year's Day the same portraits reappeared with New Year greetings to the people, Veltchev's brief message in bolder type.

At this time I had an enlightening experience. On December 17 I telephoned to a London newspaper telling of rumours, dangers and reforms; but unhappily an editorial sensation-monger made a headline of the dangers, gave authority to the rumours and omitted the reforms, the result being an article to which the Government might justifiably object. Never popular at the Foreign Office for my exposure of Supremist aims and terrorism, my praise of Georghiev's Government (which changed few officials at the Foreign Office) had increased my unpopularity. Now was my enemies' chance; Georghiev and Veltchev were in the provinces. Royal enquiries verified the origin of the article; then the Director of *Bulagence* made a grossly misleading

report to the Foreign Minister Batolov, who immediately told Bentinck I must leave the country. However, our Legation put my case to Batolov and within twenty-four hours the storm blew over.

But a *fortnight* later the Italian Minister rang me up. He wanted to see me urgently. Puzzled by his haste, I went. "As a friend" he wished to warn me that Batolov thought of ordering me from the country. I thanked him for his warning, then asked casually when he had heard the news. About a fortnight ago, he admitted. Why, then, the sudden urge to warn me now, I wondered—but not for long; he had a story he evidently hoped I would spread. Deftly he led our talk to Veltchev—a very dangerous man; did I know he planned a republic and plotted with Protogerovists against the Tsar and Queen? I answered tartly that I knew nothing of the sort: adding that little plotting was necessary because the Tsar moved about freely. In October a mechanical mishap to a train carrying Tsar Boris to Varna had inspired wild tales in the foreign Press of an attempt upon his life; in Vienna I had actually seen a photograph of the Tsar standing on the footplate of an engine upon which some clever photo-faker had painted bullet marks! Perhaps these tales had a similar origin. Italian anxiety for the Tsar's absolute prerogatives certainly bears out the supposition that he had pledged Bulgaria to Italy.

The situation became suddenly dangerous in mid-December when two provincial garrison commanders of the old school, Generals Filipov and Gerdjikov, made speeches professing devotion to the Tsar while subtly denouncing the Government. It became known that they were prepared to march against the Government at a signal from their friends in Sofia—apparently a coup was planned for Christmas Eve. Nevertheless, when Zlatev asked the Tsar to dismiss them, he refused. The Government protested. Thereupon the Tsar stormed down to the Prime Minister's office and told Georghiev he would surrender none of his prerogatives: but—"if you wish me to go, I will". Tsar Boris knew the Government did *not* wish him to go, so he resorted to the manœuvre whereby his father had resisted Stambulov. He told an entirely unprejudiced foreign diplomat his throne was insecure. A few days after H.M.S. *London* had made a routine call at Varna in January he found a pretext for calling our Chargé d'Affaires to the Palace; then the rumour circulated that he had thanked

Britain for the *London's* timely call: a demonstration that Britain, opposed to Bulgarian friendship with Yugoslavia, supported the Bulgarian Monarchy! Ardent Supremists thanked British officials! An official denial (telegraphed from London) that the cruiser's visit had political significance was suppressed by *Bulagence*.

CHAPTER XII

VELTCHEV BETRAYED

THE New Year (1935) found Georghiev's Government confronted with a dangerous situation. Agitators, shrieking that Veltchev planned a republic, had shaken many naïve officers' confidence and engineered a dangerous schism between moderates and chauvinists; they had combined to end the shameful past, but propaganda had aroused chauvinist misgivings as to the intentions of a Cabinet led by the Zveno Group and dominated by Veltchev. Many staunch Leaguers argued that if the Army governed there would be no such misgivings; moreover Zlatev apparently hesitated to agree with his colleagues upon the decree-law regularising the Government, which subordinated the War Minister to the Prime Minister. So the Prime Minister decided that either he must withdraw with Veltchev and their closest collaborators, letting those officers who blamed the civilians carry on: or let Veltchev take the reins and try by his personal prestige to rally the League, while persuading it to leave government to experts. Since the League was still the only organised body behind the Government, it fell to the League Council to decide.

In the evening of January 21 the Council assembled at Zlatev's house and eventually decided, by a bare majority, that Veltchev should take Georghiev's place at the head of a civilian Cabinet. Zlatev walked with Georghiev and Veltchev to their homes, then returned to his own, where (perhaps by arrangement) he found the Council still arguing the settled problem. Colonel Kroum Kolev led those who wanted a predominantly military Cabinet; he urged Zlatev himself to form a government and end "the unfounded but dangerous republican scare". Zlatev, finding his was the casting vote, suddenly exclaimed: "Come then! I'll do as you suggest." Kolev's opponents protested that nothing could be settled without Georghiev and Veltchev, whereupon

Zlatev retorted that there was no time to send for them again. They were told next morning. Being War Minister, Zlatev held all the cards: so Georghiev and Veltchev calmly withdrew and Veltchev resigned the League's Secretaryship.

With Georghiev went Midilev, Boyadjiev and Todorov—they lunched with the Tsar, who decorated them. Kolev became Minister of Interior: General Radev, Education (Mollov taking National Economy): Professor Dykov, Justice. Todorov was hard to replace, but eventually Colonel Kalenderov of the League Council nominated his Radical brother Svetoslav. Zlatev, with tears in his eyes, had besought Georghiev to remain Minister of Justice but Georghiev naturally declined; so the Zveno Group was unrepresented.

The Police Chief, Natchev, resigned; then Shandanov, PopTodorov, ten other Protogerovists and eight Mihailovists were interned for no apparent reason; the Protogerovists remain interned, without trial, though Mihailovists who were condemned to death are at liberty. The Tsar's former secretary Dimiter Naoumov, "a Macedonian *comme il faut*—not thick-headed like the Bulgarians" (said an Italian), became Press Director; Press revelations of Mihailovist outrages abruptly stopped and for some days the chauvinist Press fulsomely extolled the Tsar, while the British Press carried wild tales of republican plots defeated (which eclipsed my sober accounts). But there was disappointment when Kolev declared "Veltchev's position is unchanged": fury when in March Filipov and Gerdjikov were among five generals and thirteen other officers pensioned.

Though Zlatev, when I questioned him about the change, referred me to Georghiev, no explanation whatever was published until February 22. Then the censorship released a statement by Georghiev who simply said the opinion had prevailed that the Army could better interpret the aims of the *coup d'état* than his Government. The republican question, "a malicious intrigue", was "never either raised or discussed" among his friends, added Georghiev: nor any Council of State proposed: though it remained for the new Constitution to "harmonise the existing monarchical principle" with the new system of Government; he urged the new Cabinet to dissipate by a declaration "the false impression that differences of opinion . . . have arisen over a question of capital importance for the peace of the country".

On February 24 Zlatev read his carefully prepared retort, which was broadcast (by special arrangement) throughout Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Trying to justify himself and placate the agitators, he made against Georghiev (whom he had begged to remain Minister of Justice) and against Veltchev by implication, certain ridiculous charges *which he emphatically repudiated* ten months later! Conditions, he said, "which make us blush", had forced the Army to act on May 19. He referred to the "brother Yugoslav nation", declared his adherence to Georghiev's programme, emphasised that the question of a republic had "never been raised nor discussed". But Georghiev, by opposing the Army's demand for changes in the Cabinet, had aroused suspicion of certain economic measures. Moreover Georghiev had sought the Army's consent to a law (see p. 298) giving him unlimited powers, while depriving the Tsar of his prerogatives: but since Georghiev had "neither the qualities nor power of Mussolini" the Army, "faithful to its Supreme Chief", withdrew its confidence from him. The suppression of articles praising the Tsar had been a "brutal and tactless act arousing distrust, agitation, and discontent with certain directors of the new power, whose ultimate aims became suspect. . . . Their repeated attempts to obtain the Ministries of War and Interior confirmed doubts, distrust and fears and obliged the Army to insist upon having two more representatives in the Cabinet to ensure calm and prevent internal conflict which, in view of the protection accorded to the Protogerovists, might have had undesirable results."

Zlatev's reference to the Protogerovists, like the remainder of his speech, was nonsense. Protogerovists and Mihailovists who observed the laws had been treated as ordinary citizens, some of each being employed by the police to watch less lawful opponents. Zlatev soon regretted his mendacious speech which caused a reaction in favour of Georghiev and Veltchev, particularly when it was realised that with them had disappeared all hope of a truly constitutional monarchy. The Supremists would have no limitation of the Tsar's prerogatives, the Army no restoration of the old parliamentary system. And there the matter rests.

Zlatev's Government stagnated. Zlatev boasted in April that it had passed seventy-five decree-laws "for the country's economic recovery"; but most of these had been prepared, while Georghiev governed, by Ministers who had remained with Zlatev.

The Army's usurpation of power caused anxiety to neighbouring States. Turkey, fearing Bulgaria might exploit Greek troubles, concentrated five divisions in Eastern Thrace; Turkish papers wrote threateningly. When on March 1 the Greek IV Army in Western Thrace revolted under General Kammenos, Turkey thought the Bulgarians might be tempted to support Kammenos in return for an Aegean outlet. There had been aggressive talk. A military paper published a map of Great Bulgaria; then on March 3 Kojoukharov's Volkovist *Slovo* wrote: "San Stefano defined the political frontiers of the Bulgarian people. . . . That has remained the ideal of generations who have struggled in several wars and of those who must struggle again for its realisation."

On March 7 I hurried to Petritch and wallowed uncomfortably in mud and snow, wondering where all the men of militia age were and listening to desultory gunfire beyond Mount Belassitza; but I could see no fighting because Greek loyalists at the frontier posts would not let me pass: while my plan to pass (illegally) through the mountains was broadcast by an indiscreet French colleague, so the Police Commandant dared not connive at it. Then alarming rumours recalled me to Sofia. The Bulgarian delegate at Geneva had caused consternation by declaring Bulgaria threatened with Turkish invasion (though it was afterwards said he went beyond his instructions). Two classes were recalled to the colours. Zlatev explained that "we cannot mobilise because we have no classes; but each year leave is granted (for economy) to many of the soldiers the Peace Treaties permit us to maintain—and some of these have been recalled to reinforce our troops upon the frontier". Bulgarian papers were sometimes less discreet however; one wrote in 1934 that "in 1929 . . . P served his two years [in the Army] and then returned home—he could not serve longer than his time". However, the excitement died when on March 12 Kammenos fled to Bulgaria with his Staff.

Since the censorship prevented Georghiev from answering Zlatev's charges (broadcast to Yugoslavia), he gave an interview to the Yugoslav *Pravda*, utterly demolishing Zlatev's implications and challenging him to substantiate them. He showed how Zlatev had really indicted himself. *Pravda* of April 8 sold by thousands in Sofia! Zlatev was doomed. Tsankov, who had given an interview to *Pravda* a day earlier, thought this his chance and issued an inflam-

matory manifesto telling his partisans he was predestined by Providence to rule Bulgaria, urging them to ignore risks for their (Nazi) ideals and rally round Tsar Boris.

The atmosphere was now electric. Zlatev and Kolev were quarrelling: officers were standing to in barracks. Kolev actually sought Georghiev's support in a coup against Zlatev—but Georghiev, like Veltchev, would have nothing to do with Kolev after January 22; so Kolev bore Georghiev a grudge. On April 17 one of Stamboliski's former Ministers (who told me this) begged Veltchev to avert the Tsankovist danger by seizing power: but Veltchev answered:

"No—it might mean bloodshed: and never will I deliberately shed Bulgarian blood."

That same day I was with Veltchev when Georghiev came in.

"Aren't you arrested yet?" I exclaimed. He smiled.

"Not yet—but there is time."

Early next morning he, Karakoulakov and Natchev, their antagonists Tsankov, Porkov and deputy Kiamilev, also Stamboliski's former Minister Stoyanov, were all packed off together to Bourgas and interned upon the tiny one-tree island of St. Anastasia. In these cramped quarters Georghiev and Tsankov eschewed political argument; but they agreed that if either ruled again he would never intern the other! Veltchev stayed in Sofia undisturbed, though his house was watched.

Kolev had ordered these arrests, he explained, because Tsankov (whose manifesto violated the law against parties) had held secret nocturnal conferences with Porkov, Kiamilev and a serving officer, "men whom he formerly blamed for staining his work with blood": evidently there were on foot "plans calculated to bring about a repetition of the terrible events which followed June 9, 1923". Georghiev had been interned because "it appeared" that his declaration to *Pravda* had been made by decision of a political circle. Stoyanov had "allowed himself to speak in the name of the Bulgarian peasants" (to *Pravda* on April 17); his and Tsankov's activities threatened to create two hostile fronts. Actually Kolev wished to get them all out of his way so that he might himself form a Cabinet.

In protest, three civilian Ministers, who had not been consulted about these internments, resigned on April 18. Thereupon Zlatev, finding public opinion against him and threatened by Kolev's plan to seize power, handed to the

Tsar the Cabinet's resignation, leaving to the Tsar the choice of his successor.

Many thought the Tsar would have to choose Veltchev: others, Kolev; but to everybody's amazement he called André Tochev, a diplomat who had served Tsar Ferdinand only too well. Thereupon Kolev, who had been surprised by Zlatev's resignation, went to the Palace with Colonel Viktor Naidenov (Secretary of the League), to protest. But the Generals of the League would not be ruled by Colonels. Moreover Kolev was popular with nobody, least of all with the Veltchevists. So Prince Kyril entertained Kolev and Naidenov while Tsar Boris conferred with the Army Council in another wing of the Palace; he threatened, it was said, to abdicate unless Tochev headed the Government. The Military College cadets were marched through the Palace garden, cheering the Tsar (to threaten his opponents). At last Kolev and Naidenov emerged in high dudgeon. The Tsar and the Generals had agreed that Tochev should form a Cabinet of officers and civilians together, the Tsar pledging himself to uphold the principles for which the *coup d'état* had been made.

Throughout the night of April 18-19 the quiet street before my house was disturbed by jingling spurs and heavy boots as officers came and went from a block of flats near by. Veltchev seemed puzzled when I told him. Months later, I learnt that Kolev, Naidenov and Kalenderov had planned to forestall Tochev by seizing power; they issued orders to friends in provincial garrisons: but some in Sofia would not support them, so their plan was dropped. Veltchev's adherents preferred to wait until public opinion was with Veltchev (who would not speak to Kolev anyway, and was incensed at Georghiev's internment). Kolev afterwards sought Veltchev's forgiveness in vain; three months later he was pensioned, with nine other Colonels.

The next afternoon I was with Veltchev when the telephone rang. The Tsar had formally invited Tochev to form a Cabinet. "Tochev will soon prove you right," I foretold Veltchev. I had been introduced to Tochev by Georghiev during a reception at the Russian Legation and had thought him an exceptionally sinister old man. Seventy years old, with clipped beard, he had played no small part in precipitating the Second Balkan War and in swinging Bulgaria to Germany's side; he had been associated with the National Committee: had published in 1932 a violently anti-Yugoslav

book (in English) calling South Slav Federation a criminal idea: had headed Bulgarian obstruction during the Balkan Conferences; *Politika* wrote (nor was contradicted) that some time before the *coup d'état* Tochev had told Georghiev and Veltchev that Mihailov (alias the Volkovist High Command) would spare their lives if they withdrew immediately from politics! This was the Tsar's choice!

In Tochev's Cabinet were Generals Alexander Tsanev (War), Rachko Athanassov (Interior) and Radev (Education): all of the League; among the civilians were Kiosseivanov (Foreign Affairs: notoriously the Tsar's man) and "sub-Fuhrer" Kojoukharov (Railways). The Tsar proclaimed that Bulgaria would be transformed to conform with modern times. "In the near future all the transformations thus envisaged will find expression in a Constitution approved by the people, in which account will be taken of the national traditions of the Bulgarian renaissance as well as the ideas of May 19, 1934, which are supported with so much high idealism by our Army. Our people . . . may rest assured that no return to the past will ever be tolerated." Thus the Tsar endorsed the *coup d'état* (once power was his); encouraged by the rising power of European Dictatorships, he accepted responsibility for the Government—for there was less need now to appear democratic. Demonstrations of loyalty were organised. The alcohol and oil monopolies were suppressed. However, Georghiev, Tsankov, and their fellow-prisoners were released on April 26. Zlatev was pensioned and forgotten. To win military favour the Government raised officers' pay.

Since January German influence in Bulgaria had grown apace, propagated by Tsankov's Nazis (now merged with Kojoukharov's Volkovists), for the *Drang nach Osten* plan was being revived. Hardly were Tochev and Kojoukharov in power than Goering arrived, on May 26; Veltchev's coup had deferred his visit. Goering came by air upon this "honeymoon trip", with the Prince of Hesse and various high officials; though he had said during the Reichstag Trial that Georghi Dimitrov belonged to an "inferior race", the visitors were received with great ceremony. On the 27th, after lunching at Vrania Palace, Goering and his wife, the Prince of Hesse, Prince Kyril and Tsar Boris disappeared to the Tsar's hunting lodge at Tcham Koria, whence they did not return until long after midnight. On the 28th they departed, amid even greater ceremony. But the Bulgarian

Press wrote no word of the "hunting expedition", nor of the decoration Goering received!

Germany takes 42% of Bulgaria's exports, so it is reasonable that Bulgaria should take German war materials in payment—one summer night forty German tanks rumbled through Sofia, though Bulgaria was not supposed to have tanks. But Tsar Boris certainly talked of more than tanks with Goering. Doubtless Goering foretold Italo-German collaboration and Italo-Yugoslav understanding: insisting that the aftermath of King Alexander's death had proved Yugoslavia's fundamental national solidarity which terrorism would never shake but rather strengthen: urging that Bulgaria should drop the Macedonian Question, establish friendly relations with Yugoslavia, re-arm and make coastal dispositions useful to Germany in war—hence subsequent activities at small Bulgarian ports and discourtesy towards a young British archæologist who strayed that way. So Tsar Boris called off the supposedly uncontrollable clamour on behalf of "the Bulgarians of Macedonia" and concluded (in December 1936) a Treaty of Perpetual Friendship with Yugoslavia: gaining at a stroke the approbation of Germany, Italy, and of the Bulgarian masses whose will he had so long resisted. While he dictates (openly or covertly) and a censorship muzzles the Press, no movement for South Slav Federation can develop to threaten him.

Wherefore General Athanassov was able to invite Yugoslav Sokols to the Younak Rally in July; but *Bulagence*, in foreign despatches, said nothing of the public enthusiasm this aroused; and though the Tsar was Chief Younak, the royal box in the stadium remained conspicuously empty during the spectacular ceremonies of the Rally: for the Tsar wished fraternisation to be restrained.

Though Veltchev and his friends wanted reconciliation with Yugoslavia, they strongly opposed alliance with Italy or Germany. Hence Tochev and Kojoukharov worked to crush them: being supported by certain senior officers who, though they had joined the League against partisan rule, were jealous of Veltchev and hoped still to win renown in battles for Bulgarian aggrandisement. Among these was the War Minister Tsanev, who conspired with Generals Diptchev and Lukov either to control the League or dissolve it; but against them was General Athanassov, who had become temporary President of the League in Zlatev's place.

In a special paper published upon the anniversary of the

coup, which reproduced the Tsar's manifesto of April 21, Veltchev, Georghiev and Athanassov wrote condemning those who had raised the (unfounded) republican scare to split the League and impede progress; simultaneously the semi-official *Novi Dni* (still edited by Koulichev) published their photographs with laudatory articles—which the provincial Press re-echoed. Supremist *Zora* and *Slovo* retorted with invective: saying Georghiev had wished to make the Tsar a "puppet or subordinate" and urging a return to "democratic government" (of their own brand, naturally).

Soon the Volkovist-Tsankovist Ministers began to purge their Ministries of Veltchevists and members of the Zveno Group; among the first to go was Koulichev. Prominent Veltchevist officers were promoted and posted to provincial garrisons or sent abroad as military attachés. Simeon Radev, a well-known Supremist Macedonian who (after Stamboliski's downfall) had risen to be Minister in Constantinople and Washington but was among those few removed from the Diplomatic Service by Georghiev's Government, was appointed Minister in London; the Bulgarian Press did not, however, report this unpopular appointment, which a former Minister of Mouchanov's Cabinet called "sheer provocation". Next, General Vatev returned from exile. Volkov visited Bulgaria and was received by the Tsar. Petritch Department was reunited (under martial law), fresh murders were reported therein, interned Mihailovists were liberated, anti-Mihailovist police agents were dismissed, anti-Mihailovists' houses in Sofia were searched.

Then there was a round-up of "anti-social and international" Obidinenists (though the Greek Press wrote, much to Bulgarian official annoyance, that OIMRO was not Communist); the arrested Obidinenists "confessed" association with the Third International: their ramifications in Petritch Department, Greece and Yugoslavia were discovered, they were accused of planning armed revolt, some of them were condemned to twelve years' imprisonment.

Volkov's men, Tsankov's Nazis now, talked of "killing off parasites"; their terrorists were emboldened. A Mihailovist in Sofia, inclined for target practice, shot his neighbour's cat; to the owner's remonstrances he retorted: "Don't you dare complain; I am an influential Macedonian." Another Mihailovist sniped a cat in an English resident's yard. Post Offices returned Protogerovist-Federal-

ist newspapers to their editorial offices marked: "Decline to receive." Little incidents, but significant. The peasants were alarmed; many murmured against the Tsar.

Veltchev's prestige grew amazingly, the rumour circulating that he planned a Liberal-Agrarian *bloc*. Late in May his staunch friend General Dantchev was elected President of the League; Athanassov became vice-President, Naidenov remained Secretary. Naidenov had been working energetically to reconcile the Veltchevists with the disillusioned January rebels: but in June he suddenly died. His suspicious friends gave him a grand military funeral; Archbishop Stefan preached that he had stood for "the Orthodox Church and the Slav Cause". Meanwhile Veltchev waited—entirely inactive. His enemies dared not murder him for fear of his friends, so he took few precautions, ignoring threats. Once he opened his door to me himself: but his hand held no revolver. Another day his door stood wide open.

"You should take more care," I urged.

"But why?" he answered, smiling. "Life is short anyway; and mine is not really important."

Athanassov would not let the police molest Veltchev; but on June 29 Athanassov went to Yugoslavia. That same day the report circulated that the police would deport Veltchev; but Veltchev had disappeared—to Plevna, where General Dantchev commanded the garrison. Simultaneously the Directory of Social Renovation (a hive of Veltchevists) was disbanded, the audaciously Veltchevist *Kambana* (edited by the Macedonian Lazar Popovski) suppressed without reason. Then a draconian decree-law, signed by the Tsar, extended the ban upon political parties to "groups, currents, movements, circles and cells" with any political tendencies whatsoever; it forbade "*all manifestations, written or verbal, isolated or collective, of a political character: such as meetings, consultations (private or public), agitations and propaganda (isolated or organised), either by word of mouth, or by lithographed, printed or other leaflets in any form, including letters, circulars, appeals, etc.*" The penalty "in cases particularly important for the security of the State" was deportation for five years. Thus it became illegal for Bulgarians to discuss their rulers in their private houses; the opening of private letters was legalised.

This law was barely decreed when Karakoulakov (again), another high official (Koumanov) of Georghiev's Govern-

ment and twenty anti-Mihailovists were arrested "pending the conclusion of certain investigations"; then the rumour was very deliberately circulated that they had plotted against the Tsar's life—and to lend colour to it elaborate precautions (as never before) were taken to guard him. A week later Popovski was arrested, his house searched, notes upon certain compromising political questions I had put to him found. While being questioned about these notes a high police official assured me there was very grave evidence against Popovski, but he was "obstinate and would not speak"; yet three weeks later, when the High Court ordered his liberation unless the police could charge him, he was released: and all the others too, without any explanation of their arrest.

When Athanassov returned to Bulgaria Veltchev returned to his house. But not for long. On July 26 the Army Council met and, it appears, told Veltchev that since his presence stimulated unrest in the country and friction in the Cabinet he must go abroad immediately, otherwise forty leading Veltchevists in the Army would be dismissed. Veltchev agreed to go—he was never officially banished. On the 27th, hastily furnished with a diplomatic passport, he left Bulgaria secretly for Belgrade. He profoundly impressed Yugoslav interviewers by his restraint; the Bulgarian Government, he said, was doing its best. He frequented the Bulgarian Legation and cafés with his friend Kazazov, the Minister; eventually he went with his wife to stay with the Yugoslav retired Colonel Ika Panitch, vice-President of the Bulgaro-Yugoslav Association, a man strangely like him in appearance, manner and opinions: for Panitch, a well-to-do merchant now, is a staunch Agrarian friend of the Croat Agrarian leader Matchek. Veltchev naturally kept in touch with his friends in Bulgaria, whose chief messenger was an airman.

But Tochev's Dictatorship seemed paralysed by internal discord, cowed by the absent Veltchev's shadow. Its unpopularity grew: whereas Veltchev was becoming a national hero. The old urban Supremist governing class was taking everything into its hands again: Georghiev's reforms were being undone: the inarticulate rural majority were ignored. Tochev, to quieten opposition, promised a new Sobranié "early next year". The preparation of electoral lists was ordered; but since preliminary mobilisation papers were served to specialists it was whispered that the lists were military preparations too.

Then, in September, General Dantchev died suddenly and mysteriously. His death, so soon after Naidenov's, seemed to confirm suspicions that both had been murdered; nor would Bulgarian medical evidence dispel that conviction.

Towards the end of September there was change in the air. Tochev's Dictatorship was intolerable. The League, the only organised political body in the country, resolved it must go; but the League's members could not agree upon a government to replace it. Most wanted democracy: a few, military dictatorship. Veltchev's friends felt that he alone could reunite the League; for time had proved him right: his honesty nobody challenged.

Friends of Tochev, Kojoukharov and Tsankov easily learnt that Veltchev would return secretly—perhaps they found means of inciting him to do so; they planned to smash their opponents (Veltchevists and Agrarians together) by "discovering" a dangerous conspiracy for which they prepared by circulating rumours beforehand. A Protogerovist said Veltchev would return by air; I answered that his return would be premature: reflecting that my informant should never have known this, if true. The republican scare was resurrected: the military became uneasy: there was hesitation to grant leave to Reserve Cadet School cadets: Veltchevists were mysteriously warned to prepare. On September 28 Tochev denied that preparations for a coup had been discovered; two days later Athanassov complained that "these pernicious rumours" were being spread deliberately: denying that he himself was a party to any "such dangerous activities".

I had spent the afternoon of October 1 with Petar Todorov, talking history and art. Ten minutes after I left his house Todorov was arrested! Early next morning my telephone rang. Veltchev had been arrested at Slivnitsa! The Tsar was in Varna; but his Secretary attended an urgent Cabinet meeting. Martial law was proclaimed. Veltchev, it was officially announced, had crossed the frontier secretly to lead a *coup d'état* that same night, during a grand torchlight tattoo arranged (but now cancelled) to celebrate the Tsar's accession; he had hatched "this vast conspiracy" in Belgrade with the bandit Dotcho Ouzounov and Agrarian Kosta Todorov! Ouzounov, added the Police Commandant, had entered Bulgaria near Dragoman with an armed band. Wholesale arrests were ordered, telephones cut off, a

curfew imposed (for several nights). But there were no disturbances.

I cabled immediately to Reuter that these official statements were gross exaggerations intended to justify action against the Government's political opponents (but the British Press found the official story too attractively sensational!). Outside Volkovist-Mihailovist-Tsankovist circles everyone was convinced that the tale was mainly a fake, another "Spy Affair". Veltchev's reputation stood too high for destruction by unproven allegations from an already discredited Government. The public might have been more credulous had not the outworn republican scare been resurrected and Veltchev linked with Ouzounov and Kosta Todorov: the former an old bogey (believed dead), the latter (no relation of Petar Todorov) a partisan of South Slav Federation. Veltchev had refused to meet Todorov when he visited Sofia earlier in the summer. Todorov had joined the French Foreign Legion in 1914, gaining his commission before Bulgaria went to war; later, he had been dropped by an aeroplane behind the Bulgarian lines with overtures from General Sarrail: whereupon he had been sent to gaol for desertion by a court martial upon which Veltchev sat, though Veltchev had urged his condemnation as a traitor. In Belgrade he had met Veltchev once, by chance, at the Bulgarian Legation. Though the authorities pretended he was hiding in the Yugoslav Legation in Sofia, the Reuter Correspondent in Belgrade told me by telephone that he had just met Todorov (who in fact never left Belgrade); but my cable to Reuter giving this proof of official "exaggeration" was withheld by secret censorship (without my knowledge), together with other messages. *The Times* Correspondent's cables were secretly tampered with likewise. All Yugoslav newspapers were banned in Sofia—for they told the truth. As for Ouzounov, this tale so irritated Yugoslavia that the Bulgarian Government eventually denied it; nothing more was ever heard of his itinerant corpse or phantom band!

An hotel porter, tears in his eyes, told me that night:

"Colonel Veltchev was my commanding officer during the War; never shall I forget how good he was to his men. I don't know much about his political plans: but I do know he wanted to help us poor people—and that is really why he has been arrested." Veltchev, exiled, was a national leader; Veltchev, arrested, became Damian, the popular idol. But Supremists and Nazis clamoured for his blood, com-

paring his alleged conspiracy with the Cathedral outrage in 1925 and lusting for the same vengeance.

On October 3, in desperate hope of convincing the public that "this professional conspirator" had planned to "shed torrents of blood" by his "infernal plan", Tochev personally broadcast further "revelations". The conspirators had prepared a list of those they would kill—among them the Tsar, Queen, most Ministers, forty officers, numerous civilians! But the public were unmoved; many people remarked upon the striking resemblance these "revelations" bore to National Committee propaganda. Three Ministers sympathised with Veltchev, the Minister of Justice objected to declarations anticipating any enquiry. A Western Power's Representative reported to his Government that the story was a tissue of lies; Tochev (the Tsar's choice), he added, "wished to revert to the old policy of the Mihailovists to whom he belonged": recalling Veltchev's great probity and admiration for the Queen: concluding that Veltchev would never be associated with any affair which might end in massacre.

During September General Zaimov, Inspector of Artillery and Dantchev's successor as President of the League, had begun to negotiate the formation of a Popular National Bloc representing all moderate elements, but excluding the Tsankovist-Volkovist Supremists (with whom, however, the War Minister and other Generals sympathised). Since there was neither Sobranié nor free Press the League alone could take this political lead and insist with the Tsar. Zaimov and the Veltchevists planned to unite Stamboliski's (Pladné) Agrarians, the Zveno Group, Kalfov, Roussev and other reasonable men (who held that the Tsar should reign but not govern) in a truly representative Government which should proclaim a general amnesty for political prisoners and exiles. But the League Council could not agree; there were angry disputes; whereupon Major Kyril Stantchev (Adjutant of Sofia Garrison and Secretary of the League), upon his own initiative but perhaps at others' instigation, recalled Veltchev to use his influence and prevent a split. There is no shred of evidence that Veltchev returned for any less peaceful purpose.

Though Veltchev's passport entitled him to return, the Government would not grant him permission and he knew "police agents" watched for him. So he resolved to cross the frontier illegally, an offence punishable by a very small fine. Panitch, in Belgrade, introduced him to Colonel Milo-

shevitch, who commanded a frontier sector. Miloshevitch made arrangements on the Yugoslav side; for a brave man and the welfare of his "Bulgarian brothers" he willingly risked dismissal, he said (a price he paid, so Panitch employs him). Was it to hurry Veltchev into the trap that the Bulgarian Government asked Yugoslavia to intern him at Sarajevo? It certainly hurried him. Miloshevitch motored him to a frontier post. Captain Kitev, commanding upon the Bulgarian side, was ready for him and reported his arrival by telephone to Colonel Ignate Iliev, commanding Slivnitza Garrison.

The official account of Veltchev's arrest (obviously embroidered and contradictory) was as follows:

On September 29 Colonel Iliev suddenly suspended all his senior officers' leave. Suspicions were aroused. That evening Iliev told his second-in-command (Lieut.-Colonel Tomov), under pledge of secrecy, that a coup was being prepared; but Tomov promptly told two others, who agreed to watch Iliev and the garrison telephonists in touch with frontier posts. In the evening of October 1 Iliev, taking Tomov's arm, told him the time for action had arrived; whereupon Tomov answered that the officers would have no part in a coup against the Tsar. Iliev sent an officer with a car to bring Veltchev from the frontier. Veltchev reached Slivnitza at 11 p.m. Iliev took him to an officer's house; then he sent Tomov to Stantchev in Sofia to say Veltchev had arrived and ask him to arrange Veltchev's transportation to Sofia. (This clearly contradicts Tochev's story that Veltchev was *expected that night*, to lead a coup upon the next! Nor would Iliev have trusted Tomov had there really been the above talk of a coup).

At 2 a.m. Tomov and a companion reached Stantchev. He told them they must return immediately, tell Iliev the plan had been betrayed, warn Veltchev to go back. Hurrying back to Slivnitza, they reproached Iliev "for entrusting them with a mission connected with a *coup d'état without warning them*" (contradiction!). Iliev retorted that those who had betrayed the plan ought to be shot. Tomov thereupon telephoned to the War Minister in Sofia; then he called out other officers to arrest Veltchev, but could not find him. Soon afterwards General Zlatanov (Commandant of the Sofia District) arrived with police agents at his heels; he ordered Veltchev's host to say where Veltchev was hiding. They found him in a shepherd's hut upon a hill near by, took him

to Sofia, delivered him to Police Headquarters. (His prompt arrest by the military probably saved his life from the "agents".)

Colonel Iliev and fourteen other officers were immediately dismissed and arrested. The leaders of the Zveno Group were arrested too: also of the Pladné Agrarians, who were accused of "recent and innumerable acts of treason". A subaltern at Nevrokop, lately dismissed, fled to Greece for unknown reasons, whereupon his flight was held to prove widespread conspiracy. Among those arrested were the ex-Premier Georghiev (who was at Bourgas, so hardly expected Veltchev), Karakoulakov (for the third time in seven months), Petar Todorov, the retired Colonel Stavri Andreev, Koulichev and the Agrarian ex-Minister Christo Stoyanov. Officially there were 215 arrests (12 members of the Zveno Group, 106 Pladné Agrarians and 35 Protogerovists in the provinces); but many more were temporarily detained, some very roughly handled.

Hearing tales of torture I warned the Press Director that unless I saw the prisoners I should assume the worst. My demand was brusquely refused; but Doctor Moskov (of "Spy Affair" notoriety) certified that he had examined the prisoners in the presence of three (insignificant) witnesses and found they had suffered no ill-treatment. I assumed the worst. Confirmation came afterwards. Some of the prisoners were singled out for "attention"; they had neither food nor beds nor bedding: were not allowed to sleep: were constantly interrogated: were told Veltchev had crossed the frontier with Kosta Todorov and 50,000,000 "Serbian *dinars*" in his pockets: were threatened with immediate execution for "plotting to kill the Tsar" and told that since their fellow-prisoners had already confessed they had better spare themselves further torture by making like admissions. Several capitulated—hoping they might live to repudiate their admissions in court. Three months later an American correspondent found a former Agrarian deputy bed-ridden still with tortured legs. Captain Kitev, driven to desperation, slashed his wrists with a broken tumbler: but his life was saved. Colonel Krastev twice tried to dash out his brains against a radiator. The airman Lazarov, a sick man, was tortured to "confess" the messages he had carried to Veltchev in Belgrade. Andreev died, though not before he had signed, while delirious, a "confession" (written by somebody else) which became the prosecution's chief evidence!

Though Andreev died under charge of treason the League gave him an impressive military funeral. I do not think Veltchev was maltreated—none dared torture the chief accused; but his war-crippled brother's desperate gropings for means to help Damian were pathetic. Veltchev's wife was stoical; her husband had never harmed anyone, she said: nor were Bulgarian politicians ever formally executed, though most had been in gaol!

But the Judicial Section of the War Office soon relieved the police of the investigations; on October 14 it issued a *communiqué* which referred to doubts as to the authenticity of "the conspiracy to overthrow the Government in an illegal manner and establish D. Veltchev in power as Prime Minister of Bulgaria without either the consent or approval of the constitutional factors of the country". Investigation, it continued, proved the authenticity of the conspiracy, "the work of a few discontented persons idealising the personality and qualities of D. Veltchev . . ." The public must wait patiently until the judicial authorities indicated the offenders' names. Supremists were furious. The Press Directory ignored this *communiqué*!

Most of the arrested civilians were immediately released—among them Georghiev (who did not know why he had been arrested). Only thirty officers or members of the Zveno Group and those who bore traces of torture were detained. Simultaneously, the Minister of Interior (Athanasov) dismissed three police departmental chiefs and twelve agents for "exceeding their duties"; several months later the police Commandant shared their fate. Ill-treatment of the prisoners ceased; no more was heard of a plot against the Tsar, of Kosta Todorov or of Dotcho Ouzounov. Tochev and Kojoukharov engineered the re-arrest of Georghiev and several others on the 17th, but the military intervened and they were finally released two days later.

So Tochev's "vast conspiracy" boiled down to a plot by a "few persons" acting without "the consent or approval" of the Tsar—who was the only "constitutional factor" existing. Had these few persons—asked the public—conspired more than their opponents? And what non-conspiratorial means existed of changing a Government itself unconstitutional? Finally, Georghiev's release proved Veltchev's innocence, for they always collaborated.

On October 12 the Army Council issued a *communiqué* "condemning the schism of a few officers" and reserving

the right to watch over the destinies of the State. At a meeting next day the League Council voted by a majority a secret resolution; the League would enforce the principles underlying the coup: insist upon early promulgation of a Constitution: direct the aims of the Army whose duty it was to interest itself in State affairs: reserve the right to control the State through the Army Council and War Minister in collaboration with "the leading factors"; to conform with these decisions the League's Statutes would be revised by the Army Council which should control the League henceforward. Drastic measures would be taken against anyone forming a fresh League. All officers must either belong to the existing League or leave the Army—those who disapproved these decisions should be dismissed.

So the League, controlling the State, would be answerable to the Tsar's War Minister (who became ex-officio President). Volkov had exercised similar powers through the terrorists; it was the system of veiled military Government Veltchev had always opposed.

Five days later, "to normalise the situation in the Army", seventy-nine distinguished officers were dismissed by *ukase*. To his intense surprise General Zaimov found himself at their head. He had warned Tochev against insulting the Army by unfounded accusations; but as a member of the Army Council he had agreed to the others' dismissal while believing there really had been some kind of conspiracy. With Zaimov went fourteen Colonels, twenty-five Lieut.-Colonels, twenty-three Majors, thirteen Captains and three Subalterns—among them the commanders of three divisional cadres and the lately appointed Military Attachés in Athens, Berlin, Moscow and Rome. It was not suggested that they were conspirators—they were simply Veltchevists.

Next, Zaimov was arrested. Veltchev, Stantchev and Zaimov were then charged together with conspiracy; penalties ranged from ten years' imprisonment to death. Twenty-four others were charged with complicity, chief among them Petar Todorov; but they were merely a frame for Veltchev, the "professional conspirator", friend of the Agrarians. It was thought General Athanassov would join them—it was said he had known Veltchev would return; but as Minister of Interior he nominally controlled the police, so he remained free.

But the trial was repeatedly postponed "pending further



(1) Damian Veltchev (*left*) with Major Stantchev and General Zaimov during the first day of their trial—Dec. 18, 1935. (2) Damian Veltchev (*right*) and Kimon Georgiev after the funeral service at Colonel Marinopolski's grave—Sept. 2, 1934. (3) At the unveiling of a war memorial in Sofia on Oct. 28, 1934—(*left to right*): The Foreign Minister Batolov, Prince Kyril, Tsar Boris, the Prime Minister Georgiev, the Minister of Communications Zahariev, the Minister of Education Mollov, and Damian Veltchev (*right*).

enquiries". The Cabinet and military were at variance about procedure, evidence to be allowed, ultimate sentences. Tochev, Kojoukharov and their kind were determined their victims should be executed; equally determined were other Ministers and a great part of the Army that there should be fair play. However, Tochev had been proved a liar, so it soon became clear that while he governed the public would believe no court's findings. At last the Tsar intervened—evidently reassuring Tochev his face would be saved: so Tochev resigned on November 23; but Athanasov went too: Kojoukharov remained. Kiosseivanov formed a Cabinet in which General Sappov became Minister of Interior, General Lukov Minister for War. Then Volkov returned (permanently) to Bulgaria; he conferred with Porkov and others of his mafia, who were among the witnesses called against Veltchev. Razvigorov, Drangov and other terrorist chiefs were released and planned to re-form their organisation under War Office control for work in Bulgaria.

The great court martial sat at last on December 18, in the Telegraph School a mile outside Sofia and close to the prison. Mounted police patrolled the approaches, their collars turned up against the bitter wind, their horses snorting steamily into the frosty air. Journalists and relatives of the accused were admitted this first day. General Petrov presided, stern and dapper; two Colonels assisted him, another prosecuted. All were Veltchev's former colleagues of the League; they sat upon a stage, a portrait of Tsar Boris behind them: a railed enclosure before them, the dock, ringed by police with fixed bayonets. The charge had been whittled down to conspiracy against the (defunct and discredited) Tochev Government; but all Tochev's sensational embroideries had been tacitly dropped.

The accused, brought to the court in closed vans, were called in one by one. First came Veltchev, calm and dignified. Vladimir Natchev surprised everyone by marching in too, in answer to his name; he had been abroad when the others were arrested, but being prominent among Veltchev's friends he was among the accused: so he returned voluntarily to show solidarity with his comrades. The Press was forbidden to mention his gesture.

Among the witnesses for prosecution and defence were Tsankov, Zlatev, Georghiev (former Premiers), Kojoukharov, Athanasov and perhaps 200 other Generals, Colonels

and former Ministers; but Veltchev was not allowed to interrogate his accuser Tochev, nor the officer who had extorted a "confession" from the dead Andreev. Both proceedings and outcome were clearly prearranged; even bare forms of justice were ignored. Lawyers who were not reserve officers were excluded from the formidable ranks of the defence, so Veltchev lost four of his five defenders (among them Bulgaria's most celebrated lawyers); the fifth was summoned to police headquarters that night while his office was ransacked and files examined!

Before opening formalities were done the Court had to declare whether the trial should be held *in camera* or not: and if *in camera*, whether each of the accused might nevertheless have in court (as regulations stipulated) three relatives or intimate friends. The Court retired to decide—though everybody knew its decision to hold the trial *in camera* was already made; whereupon the accused whispered to their lawyers the names of those whose presence they wished the Court to allow. Veltchev looked at me questioningly. I nodded.

The Court returned. The trial would be held *in camera*. Clamorous but vain protests. Then, would three relatives or friends be admitted? The President said he would consider their names. Veltchev's lawyer rose.

"My client desires the presence of his wife, his brother and Mr. Swire."

For a moment there was dead silence. General Petrov glared. Then he called for the others' names. Somebody asked for the French Correspondent of *Havas*, another for *The Times* Correspondent, Damianov, somebody else for the Yugoslav Correspondent of *Avala*. But all independent witnesses were refused admission, though close relatives might enter at the Court's discretion.

Then the day's proceedings closed. Between a pillar and a bayonet I gripped Veltchev's hand and wished him luck before the (perhaps not unsympathetic) bayonet parted us. The last I saw of him he was climbing into the prison van. I was standing with Georghiev.

"Look at those dangerous conspirators"—he exclaimed with bitter irony: feeling he should be among them, for they were innocent as he.

For two months the trial dragged on, but no shred of published evidence proved the guilt of the accused. But much leaked out pointing to their innocence. Veltchev

declared he had left Bulgaria because terrorists were plotting against his life; he had returned to restore unity in the League. Referring to disputes between Volkov and the League he recalled how he had always insisted the Army should remain outside politics. He indignantly denied that he had wished to become President of a republic, adding: "I have always worked for the solidarity of the Monarchy with all sane and vital elements in the Army and among the people." Since January he had withdrawn completely from political activities, as the police knew well because they had watched his every movement. The suggestion that from Belgrade he had prepared a coup was absurd, as anyone with experience of staff work must know; he explained how complicated was the organisation of a *coup d'état*.

Stantchev spoke next.

"It was I," he said, "who recalled Veltchev. I recalled him to use his moral influence to prevent the League's disintegration."

General Zaimov told of his own political negotiations, recalling that the President of the Court himself had taken part in them; he eulogised Veltchev, speaking of his great influence: but he had not favoured Veltchev's return in October. Veltchev had been betrayed by comrades, many of them misled by the fictitious conspiracy story which had at first deceived him too; he demanded satisfaction for that insult.

All the prisoners flatly denied knowledge of any plot. Several told how "demons" present among police agents in the court-room had by "diabolical and systematic torture" wrung from them statements they now repudiated.

General Zlatanov, who had arrested Veltchev at the War Minister's order, said he knew nothing whatever of any conspiracy; there had been alarmist rumours, spread by police agents, which had caused uneasiness in barracks. Veltchev, he added, was a strong personality who had always striven for the Army's unity. The Sofia Garrison Commander said there had been talk of action against the Government but nobody spoke of armed action. General Zlatev praised Veltchev too; when asked why then he had made such unfavourable insinuations on February 22, he replied that his speech had been dictated by political exigencies! General Athanasov said he had no shred of evidence against Veltchev, beyond rumours from Police Headquarters; Veltchev had neither prepared nor organised anything since January 22.

Several witnesses added that though Veltchev had an unfavourable opinion of Tsar Boris, he was certainly no republican.

Among witnesses for the prosecution Kojoukharov spoke most bitterly. He "had heard", he said, that Veltchev wanted an Integral Yugoslavia under King Peter. Zaimov had promised the Pladné Agrarians four Ministries in a future Cabinet; on September 28 he had seen a list of fifty Tsankovists, among them himself, whom Athanassov wished to intern. He and Athanassov exchanged heated words in court—clearly Kojoukharov had engineered the whole Conspiracy Scare with police terrorist friends!

The Police Commandant, Colonel Bakardjiev, told that during the summer representative Protogerovists and Agrarians had been to Veltchev's house; the Protogerovists had told of preparations they were making in Plovdiv to revolt and proclaim a republic: but Veltchev (admitted Bakardjiev) would not hear of this, saying he was a monarchist and objected only to Tsar Boris personally. Somebody said Veltchev had once remarked that Tsar Boris should be squeezed till the pips squeaked!

As the trial closed the conviction prevailed in Sofia that if not acquitted the accused could receive only nominal sentences. In Yugoslavia too it was felt that condemnation of men who had made friendship between the two countries possible would signify a return to the old order—and that, Yugoslavia's leading statesman told me, would not be tolerated: adding that the future of Tsar Boris, of Bulgaria, perhaps of Europe, were at stake. Agrarians in both countries stood solidly for Veltchev; Stamboliski's former Ministers spoke of him with lively emotion. But Stoyadinovitch's Government ruling Yugoslavia was negotiating with Germany which wished Veltchev obliterated, so Yugoslav Press reports of the trial were censored (to the Opposition's fury). Then on February 16 Tsar Boris unexpectedly visited Belgrade and evidently reached an understanding with the Yugoslav Government; Veltchev would be condemned (he was anti-German), but the *rapprochement* with Yugoslavia (desired by Germany) would go on. The Tsar returned to Sofia on the 19th.

Simultaneously, foreign correspondents in Bulgaria were muzzled by amendments to the Penal Code which decreed that: "Anyone who sends to foreign countries false or grossly distorted news eminently derogatory of the Bulgarian

people or Bulgarian State is punishable with hard labour. . . . All persons who make public through the Press information of a military, economic or other nature, if its publication is prohibited, or if from its very substance or from other circumstances it is detrimental to State interests, are punishable with hard labour up to five years in peace time and ten years in time of war." Since the authorities can condemn as false or detrimental anything they choose, no free comments upon the trial were possible.

Then the Court, which had deferred the (predetermined) verdict, retired for three days. On February 22 verdict and sentences were read to the accused at an unexpectedly early hour, before either defending lawyers or relatives had arrived.

Veltchev and Stantchev would be hanged; they heard this with complete composure. Nor was mercy recommended, so the Tsar could pretend powerlessness to intervene because Georghiev's Government had annulled his prerogative of mercy. Their only hope lay in appeal to the Supreme Court Martial for retrial. Two officers were condemned to ten years' imprisonment, two to eight, and six to lesser terms—those who had helped Veltchev to enter Bulgaria, the only proved offence. But Zaimov, Todorov, and thirteen others (among them all the civilians) were acquitted.

In Yugoslavia the sentences aroused indignation, in Bulgaria consternation: for nothing serious had been proved against the condemned men. Agrarians wished Tsar Boris could be arraigned before an international court! A fierce agitation for a reprieve (supported in Yugoslavia and in England) began in Bulgaria; Malinov, Mouchanov and many other public men joined Georghiev in petitioning the Tsar. Within the League there was a violent reaction in Veltchev's favour too—so violent that the War Minister, Lukov (nephew of that Lukov who had led the first League in 1913), decreed its dissolution and confiscated its archives. The Communists, stirred by Georghi Dimitrov's appeal for an anti-Fascist front, also became suddenly active; they were dragged by hundreds to monster trials. Clearly Veltchev's execution might drive his friends to desperate acts paving the way for a general rising against the reactionaries.

Then on March 20 the Prosecutor startled the Supreme Court of Appeal. Grave irregularities, he said, had been committed at the trial and "if the sentences be confirmed I do not know where we are going to". Nevertheless, on

March 24, the Court confirmed them! Within twenty-four hours Veltchev and Stantchev would be executed—unless the Tsar intervened. Four Ministers (among them the Minister of Justice) threatened to resign; but the War Minister, clamorously encouraged by Kojoukharov and the Supremist Press, refused to recommend clemency unless the condemned men would admit they had conspired and solemnly undertake to abstain from similar activities in the future. Veltchev and Stantchev, whose courageous bearing won public admiration, retorted that they would rather die than stoop to such dishonourable means of saving themselves; they sent word to the Tsar reaffirming their innocence. Agitation in their favour became dangerous. At last the Tsar called the War Minister. On March 28, “for reasons of State”, the sentences were commuted to lifelong imprisonment.

Two days later another court martial condemned Colonels Kolev and Kalenderov to death for their April conspiracy to forestall Tochev (revealed during Veltchev’s trial); but in their case (curiously) the Court recommended clemency, so their sentences were automatically commuted to lifelong imprisonment.

But I did not watch these last events. On December 24 I had been expelled from Bulgaria.

For years British and American newspapers had been represented in Bulgaria by Bulgarians or foreigners who, depending for prosperity upon official and terrorist goodwill and not wishing to discourage trade with Bulgaria, either dared not or cared not to send news of which the authorities disapproved. German, Hungarian and Italian correspondents openly collaborated with the Supremists. My good friend the Hungarian Press Attaché, who boasted friendship with Mihailov, represented one British news agency: another was served by a Supremist official: a third by a cousin of the Press Director (whose house he shared). The Director of *Bulagence* represented a great American news agency! No wonder the Anglo-American public thought Bulgaria a model democracy!

The Supremists attached vast importance to the Anglo-American Press because, being inspired with generous principles, it would support their claims if it believed them just. Correspondents’ movements were carefully watched, controlled by a system of free railway passes; for whereas permanent open passes were issued to officials and terrorists in

such numbers that Georghiev's Government reduced them by 60%, passes to correspondents were issued only for specified journeys at several days' notice. Naturally underpaid correspondents generally waited for the passes, so local authorities could be warned of their approach.

My arrival (in October 1932) caused, therefore, visible annoyance in the Foreign Office and National Committee: particularly since I represented Reuter which serves half the world—for if Reuter reports an incident, other correspondents must either report it too or deny it. Visiting correspondents and amateur diplomats were easily stuffed with propaganda, fed and fêted and sent away flattered; but an independent resident was different. My exposure of "Macedonian" affairs and endorsement of the Georghiev-Veltchev regime exasperated the Supremists: and among leading Supremists is the suave Simeon Radev. When Radev was appointed Minister in London I foresaw trouble, particularly since I was collecting material for this book.

Supremists had warned and threatened me; but the first danger-signal was a cable from Reuter on October 5, saying Radev had protested against my suggestion that the "Veltchev Conspiracy" was a fake. Though similar protests had been made against several of my colleagues, I hid my notes—then carried on. A week later the editor of the *Near East and India* wrote warning me of approaching storm, suggesting I left the country quietly before it broke! So Radev was active! Next, an anonymous letter (the second since June) circulated in Sofia telling that I was the dangerous representative of the British Secret Service! I was watched. Friends dared not visit me. But then Reuter sent me to Athens for the restoration of King George. In Athens, late in November, I heard more of Radev's activities.

From October 5 Radev had repeatedly worried Reuter with unjustifiable complaints, saying I had not co-operated with the Bulgarian Foreign office: gleaned my news in cafés: meddled in local politics; I had actually suggested Goering's visit had political significance, whereas Goering had not been *persona grata* and Bulgaria was too small anyway to seek alliances! And I was a friend of Veltchev—an adventurer without scruples or character. On November 16 Radev announced that unless I was recalled from Bulgaria the Government would expel me (forgetting that as a "freelance" journalist I could be recalled by nobody).

This was all very tiresome because *I wanted* to leave Bul-

garia: I had arranged, six months earlier, to be home for Christmas. Before leaving for Athens I had packed, intending only to return to Sofia for my baggage. But now, if I departed, it would be said I had been recalled for sending false news; yet the Bulgarians wished to avoid the unfavourable publicity my expulsion would bring them. On December 15 I returned to Sofia—by train from Belgrade. Since I had flown to Athens the authorities, supposing I should return by air, had ordered police to stop me at Sofia air-port (and would have said afterwards this was a misunderstanding); so there was annoyance when I reappeared.

The Press Director Naoumov said the Government would not expel me but hoped I would go. I replied that on the contrary I should stay and demanded the renewal of my police identity card, which happened to expire on December 25.

Next day I was called to Police Headquarters. My card would not be renewed; would I leave my passport for an *exit* visa? I answered that until I received written intimation that my card would not be renewed I would neither leave my passport nor the country. The reply was that I should have nothing in writing. Very well, I retorted, I should stay until expelled by force—to which came the rejoinder: "We never use force in Bulgaria."

So I waited. A police agent dogged my footsteps through the snow-muffled streets; yet many old friends boldly gripped my hand and many new friends of all political shades loudly acclaimed my stand for innocent Veltchev. A former Minister of Mouchanov's Cabinet (overthrown by Veltchev) said good-bye with Slavonic emotion.

Bentinck (the British Minister) wished I would go quietly because he hated rows; however, he eventually persuaded the Press Bureau to give me the written intimation for which I stood firm. Thereupon I went. A little group of approving colleagues and loyal friends bade me farewell at Sofia station; it was with no little sadness that I saw the last of them through a veil of steam and fog and darkness as the train pulled out, carrying me to Belgrade for Christmas.

Bulagence cabled to Europe's capitals that I had "abused the hospitality of the country by interfering in its internal affairs". I wondered how my "interference" compared with (*inter alia*) the Hungarian Press Attaché's!

Throughout this whole affair I was splendidly backed by

The New York Times Chief Correspondent (Gedye) in Vienna: while the American Legation regretted that since I am a British subject they "were not in a position to take such firm action as American Legations customarily take when the threatened correspondent is an American citizen". But at the British Legation Bentinck was unhelpful. Though acknowledging my accuracy, Bentinck said he could not "press for another chance" to be given me; but since when should British correspondents ask, like penitent schoolboys, for "another chance" to tell the truth? Bentinck's attitude encouraged Supremists to boast that Great Britain supported them and invited discrimination against me, though Yugoslav correspondents transmitted columns of diatribes against the Bulgarian Government with impunity.

Determined that Veltchev and Stantchev should not die if any effort of mine could save them I saw Paul Bastide in Paris, Lord Cecil in London; talked to newspaper editors: contributed articles (which seemed to annoy Radev); but great efforts were pointless until the trial verdict was known.

Then on February 22, across the bar of a London Club, lay an evening newspaper. In bold letters it proclaimed: "Bulgarian Conspirators to die." That began the most strenuous month of my life. It is no light task to raise an agitation, single-handed and with no moment to lose, on behalf of a foreign politician at the other end of Europe. I had to contend, too, with the smug and ignorant omniscience of British "Bulgarophiles": with Veltchev's enemies' blood-thirsty propaganda through Bulgarian correspondents (who insisted Veltchev was to die for "plotting to kill Tsar Boris and proclaim a republic"): with Radev's inaccurate allegations which apparently percolated even into *The Times* (which wrote—editorially—on February 24: "The name of Veltchev has recurred at almost every turn of the page in the post-War history of Bulgaria. In 1923 there was a military *coup d'état* which overthrew the peasant Dictator, Stamboliski: Colonel Veltchev led it.") Though *The Times* does not seem to mention Veltchev until 1929, Radev declared in a letter which was shown to me that Veltchev was "the organiser and executor" of the coup which overthrew Stamboliski: had "created in the Army the pernicious tradition of conspiracies and destroyed Bulgarian democracy": had imposed upon Bulgaria "an absolute regime worse than that in any other country in Europe". Radev's passion (still unassuaged!) for Bulgarian democracy was

intriguing! Some British confusion between Veltchev and Volkov helped his propaganda!

However, Veltchev's case received "careful and sympathetic consideration" in high places. My days (and nights) were spent in weary explanation: in writing reports: in hanging about the Houses of Parliament: tramping Fleet Street: drafting articles Hitler squeezed out of the Press by marching to the Rhine. Mander thrice raised the case in the House of Commons; though the replies were non-committal, at least they showed Bulgaria that British eyes were watching. A cabled appeal for help from Mme Veltchev and Panitch, which reached me during a meeting at Chatham House, prompted Ben Riley to organise a Parliamentary Petition for clemency; but Riley, a vice-Chairman of the Balkan Committee, consulted Radev and the Petition in final form implied an assumption of Veltchev's guilt. The Petition, hastily signed by a dozen M.P.s, was transmitted on March 4; but the Bulgarian authorities withheld it from the public until I told the Yugoslav Press, which wrote of it on March 17: then they twisted it into a request for clemency *provided* Veltchev admitted guilt and repented! A less equivocal Petition was cabled to Tsar Boris by the Howard League.

Next, I drafted a letter to *The Times* and appealed in desperate haste for signatures. The letter, which mentioned "grave doubts as to the fairness of the trial", recalled Veltchev's contribution to world peace by suppressing Mihailov's terrorist organisation; but this a prominent "Bulgarophile" of the Balkan Committee would not sign because it "might offend the Macedonians". No "Bulgarophiles" signed; but on March 19 the letter appeared, signed by Lords Cecil and Strabolgi, Vyvyan Adams and D. N. Pritt (M.P.s) and Henry Nevinson. Simultaneously a full-page article entitled *Two Days to Live* (by Louise Morgan), which had been squeezed out day after day while the date of probable execution drew nearer, appeared at last in the *News Chronicle*.

Though these efforts drew an unmannerly sneer from a correspondent to *The Times*, grateful relatives and friends of Veltchev and Stantchev said the disclosure in England of "this terrible deed of political revenge . . . made a deep impression and gave a positive and favourable result" in Bulgaria. When an heir to the Bulgarian Throne was born on June 16, 1937, a customary gesture of royal benevolence

towards political prisoners reduced Veltchev's and Stantchev's sentences to fifteen years' imprisonment; but this means nothing. However, if Veltchev is not murdered, events beyond the Tsar's control may yet cast him upon Bulgaria's political stage again.

History is never concluded. Nor do I assume knowledge of Bulgarian affairs since I left the country—for second-hand knowledge of Bulgaria is apt to prove ignorance. However, the Tsar remains an absolute monarch, dictating through his Prime Minister Kiosseivanov (who is Foreign Minister too) and his Germanophile War Minister Lukov. There is neither free Press nor Sobranié.

In November 1935 Bulgaria, ever dissimulating her allegiances, joined the sanctionist States; but Hungary bought from her all Italy required. Then Tsar Boris visited Hitler and Mussolini, yet undoubtedly welcomed the propaganda value of King Edward VIII's unofficial visit (while upon holiday tour) to Sofia in the autumn of 1936. Ties with Germany, strengthened by Dr. Schacht's visit, were further developed by Baron von Neurath who went to Sofia in June 1937. Bulgaria stands now beside the Rome-Berlin Axis, which requires Yugoslav friendship and Bulgarian produce.

Early in November 1936 Mussolini spoke publicly of Yugoslavia in friendly terms. Tsar Boris acted upon his signal. On January 24, 1937, a Pact of Friendship and Non-Aggression was signed in Belgrade, proclaiming "neighbourly and fraternal relations . . . inviolable peace, sincere and perpetual friendship" between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The masses in both countries hailed it with joy, so Tsar Boris recovered some of his waning prestige while suiting his purpose. In March 1937 Italy followed suit, concluding with Yugoslavia Treaties of Friendship and Commerce. Meantime the Bulgarian Press was forbidden to mention "Minorities", so the "Macedonian Question" disappeared at Mussolini's word; the Yugoslav Premier Stoyadinovitch declared "the problem of Bulgarian Minorities no longer exists". Supremists talk now of Dobrudja and an Aegean outlet. But the birth of an heir to the Bulgarian Throne shatters the hopes of those who saw in an eventual marriage between King Peter and Princess Marie Louise a happy solution to the South Slav problem; moreover the Tsar's choice of that terrible Bulgar Tsar Simeon's name for his son is no happy omen.

Hitherto Tsar Boris' Dictatorship seems to have stood paralytically between Tsankov's Nazis and a nebulous Popular Front which clamoured for a Sobranié but could not agree whether it should be semi-corporative (the Zveno Group's plan) or partisan as of old (which the Army will not have). This disagreement was the Government's strength. In July 1936 Kiosseivanov dropped from his Cabinet two Generals and admitted two Nazis. "Free" elections for a semi-corporative Sobranié were promised in October; but Kojoukharov made such excessive preparations for the event, stimulating Popular Front counter-preparations, that the elections were dropped.

However, the Nazis redoubled their recruitment of Storm Troops. The military were irritated—save a Tsankovist minority headed by Generals Diptchev and Nedev, who were suddenly pensioned. In October the police raided a secret Nazi Congress in Sofia and detained ninety delegates, though Tsankov and Kojoukharov were discreetly allowed to escape by a back door. Thereupon Tsankov stormed to the Palace and demanded power. The Tsar answered that most Bulgarians were against Tsankov, who immediately retorted: "I know; but many people are against you too." But the Tsar stood firm: so Tsankov handed in the resignation of his two representatives in the Cabinet and hurried to consult Hitler! But Hitler, presumably, prefers Tsar Boris. Though Tsankov suddenly became the Tsar's passionate partisan while campaigning for power in 1935, he had previously been the Tsar's hot critic—and criticism Tsar Boris never forgives; nor will most of the Army have Tsankov, who is detested by the peasant masses, so the Tsar dare not call him to power.

Elections have been repeatedly deferred because of the "international situation", many newspapers banned "for their alleged democratic and socialist tendencies" (*The Times*, 26/10/36). Municipal and commune elections during March 1937, at which women (mothers only) voted for the first time, were ruthlessly manipulated to provide "evidence" of a popularity the Government is far from enjoying. Even the veteran statesman Malinov has raised loud protest against the Tsar's broken pledge to let the people have some voice in their own affairs.

In November (1937) Tsar Boris visited London, stirring much dust at one end of Fleet Street; curiously he seems to receive much more publicity than other more admirable

monarchs. With Machiavellian diplomacy he signed, before leaving Sofia for democratic France and England, a new electoral law; but from Press accounts it seems there are many pretexts therein upon which candidates disapproved by the Government will be barred. The law will be criticised by the Bulgarian Press—a censored Press which narrates only General Franco's victories in Spain!

The reactionary Supremist governing clique and Court Camarilla never weary of extolling the Tsar's devotion to democracy—they say Veltchev conspired against him for it; but they themselves, in the name of democracy, hold the vast Agrarian majority from power, labelling as Communists and ruthlessly persecuting any who speak of South Slav Federation for fear the idea may be popularised. Hitherto their brand of democracy has masked secret terror: the Hidden Power which slew Protogerov, tortured Alexiev: while Tsar Boris, like Tsar Ferdinand, pulled secret strings and marionettes bore responsibility. Veltchev led reaction against that system but was betrayed for his Agrarian leanings. Now a new "democracy" may be devised; but its tune will be the same for Bulgaria's rulers are the same.

Veltchev, uncompromising advocate of true democracy, lies in gaol for threatening the royal prerogatives.

Tsankov broods in the darkness of royal disfavour.

Tsar Boris Dictates.

NOTE.—Since this book went to press there have been important events in or affecting Bulgaria. There have been elections in Bulgaria. Bulgaria's relations with her neighbours have apparently been normalised. Mihailov has been expelled from Turkey. International developments, too, must have affected Bulgarian policy. But I have been too preoccupied with the Spanish War to follow Bulgarian affairs, so refrain from making uninformed observations. However, I would advise observers and students to study Bulgarian affairs in the light of the story I have told, carefully weighing the facts and possibilities behind the facts before reaching conclusions.

BARCELONA,

October, 1938.

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